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The Problem of Peter's Primacy in the New Testament and the Early Christian Exegesis

by Veselin Kesich

In this paper we try to show the role of the Apostle Peter at the time of Christ's ministry, after His resurrection, and in the early church, which was so close to the spirit and the time of the New Testament. Our evidence is taken from the Gospels, the Acts and Pauline Epistles, and from the exegesis of the Petrine verses in the early Fathers. This study will help us to determine Peter's place among the twelve Apostles, his leadership in Jerusalem, and his significance for the early Fathers of the church. It is important to emphasize from the start that our argument does not depend on whether or not Peter was actually physically present in Rome. Modern excavation and scholarship tend to support the ancient tradition that Peter indeed was there. We are concerned rather with how the New Testament writers and early Fathers looked upon Peter and his function in the church.

Our discussion will be centered on Matt. 16:18, which is the most crucial verse, since claims for the primacy of Peter are based largely upon it. While the passage in which this verse is found will form the foundation of this article, other passages in the New Testament will also be considered, in order to give us a comprehensive picture of Peter's role in the early church.

The problem of Peter's place in the church is a vital and controversial one for Christians today. To make our discussion of this question meaningful and informed, we must first turn to the original sources and try to recapture the person of Peter, as well as the pattern of life and relationships in the Apostolic Church. Only if we return to the living source of our tradition, the common background of all Christians, can we hope to grasp the right perspective and the spirit which will help us to understand the problems that confront us today.

The first Apostles are called to follow Christ just after Jesus' proclamation of the good news, "the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15). These first followers of Jesus are Simon, "who is called Peter and Andrew his brother." The account of the first-called disciples differs slightly in the fourth Gospel, however. Here the first two disciples come from among the followers of John the Baptist, and Peter is not one of these two. Andrew, who was explicitly mentioned as one of the two, finds his brother and brings him to Jesus, who, after looking at him, says, "So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas (rock)" (Jn. 1:42).

The account in Jn. 1:35-42 raises two questions in connection with Peter's place in the Gospel narrative. Let us start with the problem of the identity of the first disciple whom Jesus called. In the synoptic Gospels, there is no doubt that it is Peter who takes the first place. His name stands before the name of his brother Andrew. The name of Peter comes at the head of all lists of the twelve (Matt. 10:2, Mk. 3:16, Lk. 6:14). In the more restricted group of the three disciples closest to Jesus, the name of Peter always comes before James and John, whereas the latter two are not invariably mentioned in the same order. In Luke John takes second place and James the third. Only Peter, the immovable rock, occupies the first. He is the spokesman for the group of the disciples (Mk. 10:28 and parallels). He asks for the explanation of the parable (Matt. 15:15, Lk. 12:43). He is the first to confess that Jesus is the Christ (Matt. 16:13-16, Mk. 8:27-30, Lk. 9:18-21).

Although the first, Peter is not above the other disciples. Along with the other apostles, he misunderstands Jesus' mission. When Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer and to die, Jesus turned and looked at the other disciples (Mk. 8:33) before answering Peter: "Get behind me Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of Men." The other disciples were thinking what Peter expressed. In time of crisis, all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, but Peter's denial, his own individual failure, is described in all four Gospels in some detail.

Despite these weaknesses, Peter was the leader of the Apostles after the resurrection. He is the first witness of the resurrection, the first to whom the Risen Lord appeared.¹ Ethelbert Stauffer rightly observes that unless the Lord had appeared to Peter before all

others, unless He had established him again, his role after the denial in the primitive church would have been a riddle. "For Peter was not the kind of man to create this position for himself by the strength of his personality," Stauffer writes.²

In the fourth Gospel, however, John, the beloved disciple, has precedence over Peter on several occasions. For example, he is called to follow Christ before Peter. It does not matter here whether John knew of the synoptic accounts (Mk. 1:16-20, Matt. 4:18-22, Lk. 5:9-11) when he wrote 1:40-42;³ it is clear that in his account Peter is not **protos**.⁴ The beloved disciple is one of the two who heard John the Baptist say, "Behold, the Lamb of God" and who with Andrew followed and stayed with Jesus. Peter also asks the disciple whom Jesus loved to identify "the one" who would betray Jesus (Jn. 13:21ff.), implying that John possessed that knowledge. Another example of John's precedence over Peter was that the beloved disciple was the first to believe in the resurrection (Jn. 20:8).

Despite the place which John assumes in this Gospel, we cannot say that the Gospel reflects a bias against Peter. In the account of the first meeting in John, Jesus saw in Simon a rock to build on in the future. When many of Jesus' disciples drew back "and no longer went about with Him," and when Jesus asked the twelve, "Will you also go away?" it was Simon Peter who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn. 6:66-70). This is Peter's confession. After the resurrection, Peter is restored to his place of preeminence and is commissioned to "feed my sheep" (Jn. 21:15-17). Actually the author of the fourth Gospel "names Peter more than any other Gospel writer does."⁵

When did Simon receive the title of Cephas? This is the second problem posed by Jn. 1:35-42. With the words "You shall be called Cephas," Jesus pointed to the future destiny of His disciple. He does not say, "You are Cephas," but "you shall be called Cephas." Matthew, in 16:18, suggests that Simon received the title of Cephas after his confession that Jesus is the Holy One of God. Mark and Luke, on the other hand, intimate that Simon received the name when the Apostles were appointed "to be with [Jesus] and to be sent to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons" (Mk. 3:14-16, Lk. 6:14).⁶ In Mark's Gospel the name Peter is not used before the appointment of the Twelve; this suggests that it reflects the actual occasion when the name was given.

In these three different accounts of how the name Petros was given, we may perceive an underlying unity, which reveals increasingly the significance of this name. According to Jn. 1:42, the Apostle received the promise that he would be called Cephas, the Rock.⁷ At the call of the twelve, he probably was named Peter, and after his confession the meaning of the name was revealed.⁸ He was told not only that he was Peter, but also that upon him or upon "that which was the Petrine in Peter"⁹ Jesus would build His church. From the Book of Acts we see that this is carried out.

The call of Peter, the promise to Peter, and the church built upon Peter are fundamentally a single whole. At the call, the Incarnate Lord gathers individual men who are to be with Him. In the promise, something more is revealed, that they will not simply be with Him but in Him. This is realized with the Church, which is the Body of Christ. The crucial importance of Peter's position in the ministry and teachings of Jesus is obvious in these passages. But do they give Peter a special status among the twelve apostles? This is the problem we shall turn to now.

II.

The promises made to Peter in Matt. 16:17-19, Lk. 22:32, and Jn. 21:15-17 have been taken by the Roman Church as the basis for the doctrine of the unique status of Peter among the Twelve. Upon these passages are also based the claim that Peter's authority was transmitted to his successors. In this section we shall examine these passages to see whether they justify the claims based upon them.

Matt. 16:17-19 is a part of the narrative of Peter's confession in the district of Ceasarea Philippi.¹⁰ Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" They answered that some said that He is John the Baptist, others that He is Elijah, some that He is Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Jesus asks His second question, in which He is not concerned with knowing what the others, those who are outside the circle of His disciples, think, but what they themselves think and what they are ready to say about Him. Jesus addressed His question to the whole body of the disciples, but Peter was the one who replied, "You are Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). This confession of Peter is followed immediately by the often-quoted blessing and promise of Jesus to Peter: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter

(Petros), and on this rock (**petra**) I will build my church (**ekklesian**), and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:17-19). The crucial verse is without doubt Matt. 16:18, for the power of binding and loosing Peter shares with the other disciples. Jesus said to them all, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18). Peter received in common with the others the power of forgiveness of sins. After the resurrection His disciples received the Holy Spirit, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained" (Jn. 20:22-23). But only Peter was promised that the church would be built upon him, both on him personally and on the rock of his faith, since there is no difference between **Petros** and **petra** in Aramaic. Cephas stands in Aramaic for both Greek words. There is a formal and real identity between them.¹¹ Thus Peter's faith and Peter's confession cannot easily be separated from Peter himself. And this **petra** is not simply Peter's faith, underlying his confession, but may also be taken as referring to Peter personally.

In addition to this passage, there are two other places in the Gospel which have been used to support the claim of the primacy of Peter. One, Lk. 22:32, is given in the context of the Last Supper, and the other, Jn. 21:15-17, belongs to the post-resurrection narrative. Among these three, "**erux interpretum... et criticorum**," as a modern interpreter stresses, is still Matt. 16:17-19. These verses played a significant role, as we shall see, in the early church. The other two did not. For that reason, our discussion will be concentrated upon the passage in Matthew, without overlooking the other two.

Because the account in Matt. 16:17-19 is in one Gospel only, some scholars denied its authenticity. Its omission in Mark and Luke was a subject of discussion even in the early Church. For example, Eusebius tried to explain that Mark, "the friend and follower of Peter, whose teaching he repeats, does not record that Jesus said anything in reply to Peter's confession... probably because Peter did not speak of it in his teaching and wished it passed over in silence. But Peter published to all men his denial, hence Mark records it. This is a proof that Peter was far removed from self-love, and was of a truth-loving disposition."¹² This solution, based upon the humbleness and modesty of Peter, has satisfied very few indeed. Others

attributed the existence of these verses in Matthew's gospel to its particularly favorable attitude, even bias, towards Peter. This cannot be supported by the Gospel itself, however. Matthew does not picture Peter in a better light than do the other evangelists.¹³ As we have already seen, it is difficult to perceive either hostile inclinations against Peter in one Gospel or particularly friendly tendencies in the others. In the Pauline epistles as well we cannot detect any bias against Peter. I Cor. 1:11 mentions Cephas' party, a group of people in Corinth adhering to Peter. Paul criticized the spirit of faction, the sectarian spirit, but not Peter personally. He is not blamed for this state of affairs in the church in Corinth. Nor could we conclude from Paul's remark in I Cor. 9:5 that there was any bias against Peter.¹⁴ We have no evidence that there was such a bias in the early Church.

The absence of Matt. 16:17-19 in Mark and Luke is more likely to indicate the nonexistence of any doctrine concerning the primacy of Peter than prejudice against him. As one writer asserts, since the verses appear only in one Gospel, they "could never have been intended as the foundation of so important a doctrine as that of the permanent supremacy of St. Peter."¹⁵ Paul, in his letter to Galatians, which was written before any of our four canonical gospels, witnesses to the absence of this doctrine, although he is, perhaps, acquainted with the actual words of Matt. 16:16f.¹⁶

The passage is clearly not an interpolation of the later Church into the Gospel narrative. It has a Palestinian background. The form of Jesus' reply is Hebraistic.¹⁷ There are parallels to Matt. 16:17-19 in the Qumran literature.¹⁸ This again indicates the Palestinian origin of these verses. Matt. 16:18 occurs in all the Greek MSS and ancient translations of the Gospels.¹⁹ But the question still remains as to whether Jesus spoke the words recorded in Matthew. Do these words correspond to His teaching? Did He intend to build His Church?

The Incarnation and the call of the first disciples imply that Jesus intended to build His Church, which would carry on His work. It is suggested in the title which Jesus applied to Himself, "the Son of Man." Taken from Dan. 7:13f., this name embraces both the communal and individual aspects of Jesus' work, and points to the foundation of the eschatological community. "The Son of Man" is the Messianic title which expresses the role of the Messiah in His humiliation and suffering, as well as in His exaltation and divine so-

vereignty. Accordingly, Jesus' reply to Peter in Matt. 16:17-19 cannot be considered in isolation. We are not only certain that "Matt. 16:18 does not stand alone," writes K. L. Schmidt, "but also [we] realize... that this conception of the complex of ideas (Jesus, Messiah, Son of Man, Disciples, Community, Lord's Supper) leads directly to the Pauline and sub-Pauline doctrine of the **ekklesia**, which on the one hand is 'from above' and on the other is 'the Body of Christ,' just as Christ is at the same time highly exalted and present in the midst of the community. The question whether Jesus himself founded the Church is really the question concerning his Messiahship."²⁰

People have often refused to see the source of Matt. 16:17-19 in Jesus Himself, out of either partisan interests or dogmatic presuppositions. Some of these interpreters are interested in fighting the doctrine of the primacy of Rome, while others, starting from preconceived conceptions of the separation between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith," reach the same conclusion. There is nothing, however, in Matt. 16:17-19 which would contradict Jesus' teaching and His work, as they are given to us in the Gospels. As such we may accept them as the authentic words of Jesus.

Once we have accepted the authenticity of the passage, we must turn to the meaning of it. We cannot be sure which Aramaic expression our Lord used in Matt. 16:18 for **ekklesia**. The most likely possibilities are *gehala* (*gahal* in Hebrew, "the people of God," "people set apart for God's special service") or *kenishta* (a local Jewish community), the word which K. L. Schmidt considers as "highly probable."²¹

In order to grasp the meaning of the word **ekklesia**, we must see how it is used elsewhere in the New Testament. The introductions to some of the letters written by Paul are instructive in this regard. The recipient of First Corinthians, for instance, is "the Church of God which is in Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2). The church at Corinth is a local church, yet it is the Catholic Church. It is not a part of the universal Church, but is in itself "the universal church," in the sense of Ignatius' words, "where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church,"²² or as Irenaeus says, "where the church is, there is to be found the Holy Ghost and all grace."²³ Consequently, the Church in its fullness is present in a limited locality. The **ekklesia** in the New Testament primarily means a local church.²⁴ What distinguished these gatherings from others in the ancient world was the celebration of

the Lord's Supper.²⁵ The new people of God now gather in the Body of Christ.

The fullness of the Church, its catholicity, is manifest at the Eucharistic gathering. The term "the Body of Christ" has its origin in liturgical life.²⁶ Christ's promise to Peter, "I will build my Church," would therefore refer to the people of God, assembling as His body at Eucharistic gatherings of every local Church.²⁷ Thus the words of Christ recorded in Matt. 16:18 are fulfilled at Pentecost, at the Eucharistic gathering with Peter at its head.

While the passion narrative tells of Peter's failure, the post-resurrection narrative tells of the restoration and "the growth of Peter." Peter is the leader of the earliest Christian community. On the day of Pentecost, Peter addressed the people, exercising his power of binding and loosing (Acts 5). The sick were carried out into the streets, "that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them" (Acts 5:15) and heal them. Before the high priest, who asked the apostles not to teach in Jesus' name, "Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men,'" (Acts 5:29), thus overcoming the temptation to which he had succumbed during the ministry of Christ, when he had been rebuked for being not on the side of God but of men (Matt. 16:23). Peter is the missionary to Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. He is called the Apostle of the Circumcised, the missionary among the Jews. We do not have any direct New Testament reference to indicate when he was appointed to this special task; Jn. 21:15ff, "Feed my lambs, shepherd my sheep," may point primarily to this vocation, as a missionary to the Jews.²⁸

Even after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, however, it would be inaccurate to describe Peter's position as one of primacy in the Apostolic Church. At a certain time, Peter's leadership over the Church in Jerusalem terminated, and James, the brother of the Lord, appeared as the new leader of that church. We cannot say specifically when this occurred, perhaps after the death of Stephen or the death of James the brother of John. The Book of Acts, as well as the Epistle to the Galatians, imply the change without indicating the time it took place. When Paul went to Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion, he went there with the purpose of visiting Cephas, and he stayed with Peter fifteen days (Gal. 1:18). Peter, at this time, was the head of the community. Fourteen years later, Paul went again to Jerusalem, not drawn by

his own desire but "by revelation" (Gal. 2:1-2), and he mentioned three pillars, the first of whom was James (Gal. 2:9). At the first Apostolic Council, described in Acts 15, James played the role of the leader. According to Acts 21:8, when Paul found himself in Jerusalem again, James was the only one mentioned by name. All these facts, to which must be added Paul's opposition to Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-12), speak against the primacy of Peter.

The evidence points to the preeminence of the Church in Jerusalem and her leaders, rather than to the primacy of any Apostle, either Peter or James. Jerusalem, God's chosen city, is the place of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. At the time of the Pentecost, the Gospel was proclaimed in this city to Israel, to the Jews from Palestine, as well as to those from the Diaspora. It is the center of missionary activity to Israel, and Paul, by his visits to Jerusalem, demonstrates the tremendous significance of the Gentile mission for the salvation both of Jews and Greeks. Still neither these visits of Paul nor his collection for the poor in Jerusalem suggest that Jerusalem exercised authority over the young churches, nor did the Church leaders in the city try to bring these churches under their supervision. It is doubtful that even Gal. 2:12 indicates this.²⁹ When other local churches came into existence, Jerusalem had no primacy over them. The primacy of honor which the Holy City occupied among other churches was derived from the events of salvation which took place there and from its being the first *ekklesia* in Christ, not from power over other churches, which Jerusalem did not possess.

The primary meaning of *ekklesia* in the New Testament, as we have seen, is the local church, which embodies the Church Universal, the Catholic Church. Therefore, in the framework of the New Testament, one church cannot possess "primacy" over other churches. Therefore a concept of the "universal church," of which each local church is only a part, cannot be justified by the New Testament itself.³⁰

Closely connected with the doctrine of the primacy of Peter is the question of the transmission of Peter's power and dignity to his successors. What could Peter, the leader of the Twelve, transmit to his successors? The Twelve had a special position among the New Testament apostles. Barnabas and Paul are also apostles. "But while Paul claimed parity with the Twelve in the matter of apostleship," T. W. Manson observes, "he did not claim to be one

of the Twelve. Nor did anybody else.”³¹ The Twelve, who received the Gospel for us from Christ, had a special status in the early community. The office of the Twelve was one of service, not of privilege. What privilege there was in the office of an apostle came from the fact that the apostle was directly called by Christ.³² In the full sense of the word, the Twelve became apostles with the Resurrection of Christ.³³ They are witnesses to Jesus’ Palestinian ministry, to His resurrection, and as such the first Christian missionaries.³⁴ In authority and power they are equal; there are no degrees of power in the circle of the Twelve, although there are “degrees of intimacy,”³⁵ or what we may call “degrees of honor.”³⁶ When there was a dispute as to “who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 18:2), Christ called to Him a child, put him in the midst of His disciples, and spoke to them about lowliness, not exaltation. When the mother of the sons of Zebedee asked for special places for her two sons, Jesus indicated their suffering and martyrdom. During the Last Supper, when they were not free from thoughts of greatness, Jesus exhorted them to service. Instead of “degrees of greatness,” Christ pointed out humility, suffering and service as their future lot.

The number of the Twelve could neither be reduced nor increased. They are the Twelve, and to them Christ promised that they would sit on thrones and would judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk. 22:30, Rev. 3:21). When James, the brother of John, was killed (Acts 12:1), nobody took his place among the Twelve. But after Judas’ death, his office was taken by another disciple of Jesus. It was Judas’ apostasy, not his death, that forced the selection of a new Apostle.³⁷ With the choice of Matthias for his vacant place, God Himself, not the community, created a new apostle. The community put forward two persons who fulfilled the requirement, namely, “who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22), and it was God who appointed Matthias. The lots which they cast stand for God’s choice.³⁸

The Apostles are represented in the New Testament as a group with a special position. The early history of the Church also confirms their unique status. In a justly celebrated essay, using evidence given by Irenaeus and Eusebius, C. H. Turner shows that

the bishops who carry on the Apostolic succession in Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome are distinguished from the apostles who founded those churches.³⁹ A line is drawn between the Apostles as the founders and the bishops as their successors. In Rome, for example, Linus is “first after Paul and Peter.” It does not say he is “second.” Clement, coming after Linus and Anencletus, is “in the third place from the apostles.” At Antioch, Ignatius is “second in the Petrine succession” in this city. “In whatever sense the bishops are successors of the apostles,” writes Turner, “the office of the apostles is not identified with the office of their successors... Neither in Irenaeus nor in Eusebius are the Apostles counted as units in the episcopal list.”⁴⁰

The special status of those who knew Christ at the time of His ministry, who were with Him, who are witnesses to His resurrection, cannot be transmitted to their successors. Nobody can succeed to the unique status promised to the Twelve (Lk. 22:30). The Apostles cannot transfer their places in a kingdom appointed to them, nor could Peter transfer his role as the rock of the first Church in Christ. Only the Church as a whole succeeds to these apostolic privileges. Their successor is the Apostolic church, which possesses the fullness of apostolic tradition and with which Christ identifies Himself (Acts 9:4). Christ’s promise to Peter was fulfilled in the Church in Jerusalem. Every bishop in the Apostolic Church who occupies the place which Peter occupied at the Eucharistic gatherings and who performs the pastoral duties which Peter performed, is the successor to the Apostle.⁴¹ He cannot, however, succeed to Peter’s unique place as a member of the Twelve, the first witness of the resurrection, and the first head of the first assembly in Christ. Both the New Testament and the early history of the Church are in full agreement on this point.

III

At the beginning of the third century, we find the first use of Matt. 16:17-19 as evidence for primacy. The ecclesiastical struggles of this period left their mark upon the exegesis of the Petrine verses.⁴² It is in Tertullian’s *De Praescriptione haereticorum*, ch. 22, that we find Matt. 16:18-19 explicitly mentioned for the first time in ancient Christian literature.⁴³ In this chapter, the Latin Father deals with the problem of the knowledge of the apostles and their fidelity in transmitting the Faith. He is discussing an

apparent contradiction in the statements of certain heretics on these questions. Tertullian argues that heretics say, on the one hand, that the apostles did not know all things, and, on the other, that the apostles knew all things but did not hand them over to everybody. Those whom Christ ordained to be **magistros**, whom He kept by Him and to whom He explained all things (Mk. 4:34) were not ignorant men, Tertullian insists. "Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter," adds Tertullian, "who is called 'the rock on which the church should be built' who also obtained 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' with the power of loosing and binding in heaven and on earth?" Was anything, again, concealed from John, the Lord's most beloved disciple, who used to lean on His breast, to whom alone the Lord pointed Judas out as the traitor, whom He commended to Mary as a son in His own stead?"⁴⁴

Tertullian's references here are important for our purpose for two reasons. First, he expresses the view in general terms that there was no distinction between the apostles in the degrees of their knowledge. Second, after he quoted Matt. 16:18-19, he immediately mentioned the name of the apostle John, making it quite clear that Peter's knowledge was not above the knowledge of John.

In **De Pudicitia** 21⁴⁵, Tertullian disputes the views of Callistus, the Bishop of Rome, who asked that penance be given to those who committed sins of unchastity. Tertullian starts with a statement that the apostles were given the power to forgive sins. But this forgiveness of sins was done "not in the exercise of discipline but of power," which comes from God. Whereas "discipline governs a man, power sets a seal upon him, apart from the fact that power is the Spirit, but the Spirit is God." He then asks the bishop for prophetic evidence "that I may recognize your divine virtue, and vindicate to yourself the power of remitting such sins! If, however, you have had the functions of **discipline** alone allotted you, and (the duty) of presiding not imperially but ministerially; who or how great are you, that **you** should grant indulgence..." Tertullian agrees with the bishop that "the church has the power of forgiving sins," but to him it must be the church of the prophetic Spirit. Finally, he inquires on what basis Callistus claims this right to forgive sins. Is it because of Jesus' words to Peter? He quotes Matt. 16:18-19 and emphasizes that this promise is conferred personally upon Peter. No bishop has part in Peter's personal prerogatives. "**On thee**," He says, 'will I build My Church'; and 'I will give to thee

the keys,' not to the Church, and 'whatsoever thou shalt have loosed or bound,' not what they shall have loosed or bound."⁴⁶

This statement by Tertullian is obviously influenced by his Montanism. For our purpose it is interesting to note that Tertullian considers Matt. 16:18-19 as a personal promise to Peter. In other words, Tertullian does not make any distinction here between **Petros** and **petra**. The Church is built upon Peter personally.⁴⁷ His role as the rock of the Church cannot be transferred.

In his controversy with Bishop Stephen (254-257), Cyprian expressed the view that any bishop, whether in Rome or elsewhere, was meant in Jesus' message to Peter. Cyprian is in agreement with Tertullian in his unwillingness to accept the claim of exclusive authority for the Bishop of Rome, on the basis of Matt. 16:18-19. He differs from Tertullian, however, in understanding Jesus' words to Peter as referring to the body, the corporate body, of bishops, not only to Peter personally. While Tertullian in his fight with Callistus insists that the church is built upon Peter personally, Cyprian in his dispute with Stephen emphasizes that the Church is built upon **one man**.⁴⁸ Cyprian is mainly concerned with the unity of the church, and he supports this unity by Jesus' promise to Peter, to one man. The identity of this man is secondary to the fundamental significance of the implication of unity. Peter is not superior in power to the other apostles, for according to Cyprian all of them are equal.⁴⁹

In the pre-Nicene period Origen was the most outstanding exegete. He interpreted Matt. 16:17-19 more than once. Origen interprets Christ's words to Peter as addressed not only to the Apostle Peter but to every disciple of Christ who confesses Him as Peter did. For Origen, the image of the rock is applied to every follower of Christ, who in turn becomes "a Peter." Christ is "the Rock," and all his followers should be called "rocks." Peter is not the only one upon whom the Church must be built. In his interpretation, Origen uses Eph. 2:20, where the apostles and prophets are declared to be the foundation on which the church is built, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone. The following passages will give an impression of the nature of Origen's approach to the problem: "If we say what Peter said, not by revelation of flesh and blood, but by light from the Father in Heaven having illumined our hearts, we ourselves become as Peter, and are blessed like him, because the very reasons for which he was blessed have extended to us..."⁵⁰ Also:

If we live according to flesh and blood, yet confess Jesus Christ to be the Son of the living God, holding, e. g. the doctrine we have received from our parents; then it is not the Father that has revealed it to us, but flesh and blood. Therefore we are not steadfast in faith in Him, as Peter was, nor shall we receive a blessing like his. But if we have said what Peter did, by light shining into our heart from the Father in Heaven, we become a Peter, and to us might be said by the Word, 'Thou art Peter'... For a Rock is every disciple of Christ from Whom they drank who drank of the spiritual Rock following them; and on every such Rock is built the whole message of the Church, and the corresponding mode of life; for in every one of the perfect who have the sum of the words and deeds and thoughts which complete blessedness, is the Church that is built by God.

But if you think the whole Church to be built by God upon that one Peter only, what would you say of John the son of thunder or each of the Apostles? Are we to venture to say that the gates of Hades do not prevail against Peter by a special privilege, but prevail against the other Apostles and the perfect? What is said surely belongs to each and all of them, since all are 'Peter' and 'Rock,' and the Church of God has been built in them all, and against none who are such do the gates of Hades prevail. Is it to Peter alone that the Lord gives the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and will no other of the blessed receive them? But if this privilege is common to all, so also are all the preceding words addressed as it were to Peter. Here 'Whosoever thou shalt bind on earth shall he bound in Heaven' appears said to Peter; but cp. John 10:22-3, spoken to all men constituted as Peter was... For all followers of Christ, the spiritual Rock, take their name from the Rock. Being members of Christ, they take from Him the name of Christians; but from the Rock, that of Peters.⁵¹

On the other hand, when Origen is discussing Matt. 16:17-19 in a less systematic way, he sometimes identifies only Peter with the rock. In the following passages, for example, where he asserts that Christ promised to built His Church on Peter personally, he ignores the distinction between **Petros** and **petra**, which he stresses in his main discussions of the passage: "To that great foundation of the Church, and most solid rock, on which Christ founded the Church, is said by the Lord, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'" "Peter, on whom is built the Church of Christ, against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail..." "Peter, against whom the gates of Hades prevail not..."⁵² These

three brief references should be regarded as divergent from the main trend of Origen's exegesis of Matt. 16:17-19.

Origen's systematic exegesis of Matt. 16:17-19 is followed by the Fathers of the Antiochean school in particular. Their exegesis is dominated by the concept of **petra**. Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chrysostom link **petra** with Peter's confession, and the confession with the faith.⁵³

The other two passages which have been used to justify the doctrine of primacy, Lk. 22:31-32 and Jn. 21:15-17, are interpreted in the context of the Gospel narrative. The Fathers do not see in them implications of primacy. Chrysostom's exegesis of Lk. 22:31 is typical of the Eastern Fathers. In his **Hom.** 82 on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chrysostom deals primarily with Lk. 22:31, and gives us here a theology of Peter's denial. While they were on the Mount of Olives, Jesus told the apostles that they would fall away; all of them would be offended because of Him. Then Peter, who could not agree to be included among "all" the others and full of self-confidence, declared that he would never fall away (Matt. 26:36ff). This is followed by Jesus' prophecy of Peter's denial. In His desire to shake Peter's self-confidence, Chrysostom writes, Christ permitted Peter to deny Him. In Lk. 22:31, Chrysostom sees the evidence for this. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Lk. 22:32), quotes Chrysostom, and he adds, "For this He said sharply reproving him, and showing that his fall was more grievous than the rest and needed more help." Christ said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee," not for **you**, in order to show to him, Chrysostom stresses, the depth of his fall, which was more sorrowful than the falling away of the rest of the apostles. But through the prayer of Christ Peter would return and strengthen the brethren.⁵⁴ The New Testament itself indicated the interpretation that Chrysostom developed. When Peter answered Jesus, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (22:33), he showed that he understood Jesus' words as a prophecy of his fall. This verse corresponds to Matt. 26:33, "though all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."

The third passage quoted in connection with the primacy of Peter is Jn. 21:15-17. These verses, according to the early Patristic exegesis, do not express or point to any particular authority given to Peter by Christ, but rather to Peter's pastoral duty after His denial. Peter received forgiveness after he denied Christ three

times. The Fathers linked Lk. 22:31-32 and Jn. 21:15-17 and are in agreement in their exegesis of these two passages. Cyprian, for instance, after quoting Jn. 21:17, writes that this saying "arose out of the very circumstance of his [Peter's] withdrawal, and the rest of the disciples did likewise."⁵⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus speaks about the fall of "the great Peter," whom "yet Jesus received... and by the threefold question and confession healed the threefold denial."⁵⁶ Cyril of Alexandria does not perceive a unique status for Peter in this passage, but, as E. Hoskyns puts it, "a uniqueness in denying the Lord." Hoskyns quotes Cyril of Alexandria as follows: "Why is it that Christ only asks Simon, though the other disciples were present?... We reply that... Peter's transgression by his thrice-repeated denial was special and peculiar to him. Therefore, as he had received a greater measure of forgiveness than the rest, he is asked to tell Christ whether he loved Him more."⁵⁷

Although the Greek Fathers, in their exegesis of the "primacy" passages, granted that the Apostle Peter held a place of honor, of preeminence, they never suggested "that Peter's position as leader carried with it a status different in kind from that of the other apostles," nor did they imply that Peter's authority was transmitted to his successors in a particular Church.⁵⁸ The Fathers' view of Peter may be summarized in the words of St. Theodoret: Christ permitted "the first of the apostles, whose confession He had fixed as a kind of groundwork and foundation of the Church, to waver to and fro, and to deny Him, and then raised him up again."⁵⁹

Peter did not possess primacy either during the ministry of Jesus or in the church in Jerusalem. It is true that he occupied the central place among the Twelve; he was the spokesman of the group and the leader in the church, but he, like the other apostles, lacked the special authority that a doctrine of primacy would have given them. Peter exercised his power in agreement with other leaders in the church. He presided at the Eucharistic gathering and used the power of the keys, of which Christ was the possessor (Rev. 1:18). Peter did not exercise "despotic authority" in the church; the life of the church which had been built on Peter as the rock was sustained by love and freedom.

For the Fathers of the early Patristic period, Peter held the same position that he occupied in the New Testament. He is "the mouth of the disciples, the leader of the band." He is the first who confessed Jesus, and the first to enter the Church. Peter, the prince

of the apostles, is "the beginning of the Church." He is "the chief of the Apostles and the bearer of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." It would be easy to lengthen this list of quotations from the early Patristic writings describing Peter's role. They give us no basis to conclude that these Christian teachers supported any doctrine of the primacy of Peter. In their dealing with the three main Petrine passages in the Gospels, they never interpreted them to justify either the primacy of Peter or that of any particular church. They saw in Matt. 16:17-19 proof of Christ's authority, not of Peter's.

Finally, this exegesis was produced in a period of a united church, when relation between East and West had not yet been marred by the strain and conflict of later periods. These Eastern Fathers represented the common mind of the church, lived in the spirit of the New Testament, and drew their inspiration from it.

References

¹Paul handed on to the Corinthians what he himself had received, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and "he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." After appearing to "more than five hundred brethren... he appeared to James, then to all the Apostles" (I Cor. 15:3-7). E. Stauffer in **Jesus and His Story** (SCM Press, London, 1960, translated from the German, pp. 122, 182) thinks that these verses (I Cor. 15:5,7) suggest the existence of two separate lists of witnesses. First we have Cephas and the twelve, and second James and all the Apostles. These two competing lists, Stauffer believes, reflect the ancient dispute between Peter and James. But we have no evidence in the New Testament of such a dispute.

According to the longer ending of Mark (16:9), Jesus "appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons." Jn. 20:11-18 agrees with Mk. 16:9. Mary Magdalene is not mentioned as a witness in I Cor. 15, however. The position and role of women may perhaps have influenced Paul in his omission of Mary Magdalene's name. If "women are not qualified to be witnesses," then to put their names as witnesses to Christ's appearances would make these lists "illegal." For the early Christians the list of witnesses "must be invulnerable against the cut and thrust of legal proceedings about the attestation of Christ's resurrection" (E. Stauffer, *op. cit.*, p. 124).

In addition to I Cor. 15:5, it is possible that Lk. 24 is another reference which indicates that Peter was the first to whom the Risen Lord appeared. Some scholars assert, on the basis of the rendering in Codex Bazae of Lk. 24:34, that the two men who were going to Emmaus were Cleopas and the Apostle Peter. In Codex Bazae we have *legentes* instead of *legontas*. As a re-

sult of this change, the verses of Lk. 24:33-34 are translated as follows: "They found the Eleven and their followers gathered together, and they said: the Lord is truly risen and has been seen by Simon" (J. H. Crehan, "St. Peter's Journey to Emmaus," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 15, 1953, p. 421). This has been regarded as an indication that this announcement was made by Cleopas (see R. Annad, "He was seen of Cephas," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. XI, 1958, p. 180).

If Peter was with Cleopas, this would be in apparent conflict with the later statement that when they returned to Jerusalem they found "the eleven." Judas, because of his apostasy, could not be numbered among these eleven apostles. Thus the statement seems to exclude the possibility that Peter was with Cleopas. And "they" who said, "the Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon" does not refer to the "two of them" on the road to Emmaus, but to those whom they found on their return to Jerusalem. On the other hand, we must remember that the same confusing enumeration is found in I Cor. 15:5: "he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." And in Acts 2:14, after the election of Matthias to take Judas' office, we read "Peter standing with the eleven..." We must conclude, then, that in these cases the expressions "the eleven" and "the twelve" do not report the exact numbers, but point to the Apostles as one unit, one body.

The ambiguity of Lk. 24:33-34 is avoided in Mk. 16:12f. The latter "reveals that 'the residue' (*hoi loipoi*) were 'the Eleven' only after they had been joined by 'the two' from Emmaus (one of the twelve and Cleopas?)," (R. Annand, *op. cit.*, p. 185).

²E. Stauffer, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

³Whereas E. Hoskyns states that Jn. 1:40-42 "must be read against the background of the call of two pairs of brothers" (*The Fourth Gospel*, London, 1947, p. 179), C. K. Barrett (in *The Gospel According to St. John*, New York, 1957, p. 151) writes that John here does not use the Markan material of the pair of brothers (Mk. 1:16-20).

⁴Origen tried to reconcile the synoptic account of Peter's call with Jn. 1:41-42. "It is worth while," Origen writes, "to examine how now Andrew on the second day from Jesus' baptism straightway finds his own brother Peter; but elsewhere Jesus many days after His baptism finds Peter and Andrew his brother, according to Matthew. It is then probable that Andrew at first, having brought Peter to Jesus, received a slight benefit from his Teacher; then, after his brother had received benefit, he had withdrawn to rest at their home; but that Jesus, after the former call, has called them to follow Him continuously, with power to fish men through the teaching He bestowed on them. He says 'come and see,' perhaps by 'come' calling them to action, but by 'see' suggesting that there will certainly be contemplation following..." (Frag. 21 given in Harold Smith, *Ante-Nicene Exegesis of the Gospels*, London, 1926, pp. 2-3).

⁵P. Parker, "John and Mark," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 79, Pt. II, June 1960, p. 101. The author of this interesting article proposes a new theory for the authorship of the fourth Gospel, John Mark; he is influenced by this theory in his evaluation of the place of Peter in the second Gospel. He states that this Gospel narrative gives us less material, it says

less, about Peter than either Matthew, Luke or John. According to tradition, Mark was Peter's interpreter. In Parker's view, "the unnamed disciple constantly acts as interpreter for Peter... Always he opens the way for Peter, explains, interprets for him" (p. 102). On the other hand, Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London: MacMillan & Co., 1955, p. 168) makes the following comment: "Proportionately to its size, Mk. mentions the apostle more frequently than Mt. or Lk... the vividness with which the personality of the apostle is presented in Mk. is characteristic of the Gospel and is in harmony with the Papias tradition." Taylor's conclusion seems to be fully justified by study of all reference to Peter in the synoptic Gospels. In Mk. we have Petrine stories (1:29-31, 4:35-41) which probably come from Peter himself. In the Gospel of Mark, the story of the healing of Simon's mother-in-law is described in forty-four words, in Greek, whereas the first evangelist, in his much longer Gospel, presents the story in thirty words. Mark's account is not only longer but is much more graphic than Matthew's or that of Luke, who uses thirty-eight words in his narrative. To this we may add that Mk. 1:29-31 is part of a longer narrative, which described the first day of the Lord, the manifestation of the Day of the Lord (1:21-34). It tells of Jesus entering the synagogue, His teaching and healing the sick, and, at the end of the day, "that evening, at sundown," healing and casting out demons are reported. On this first day Jesus "entered the house of Simon and Andrew..."

⁶The synoptics give us the lists of the twelve which immediately follow the narratives of the Call of the Twelve. In each of these lists both the names of Simon and Peter are mentioned. Matthew gives it as "Simon who is called (*legomenos*) Peter" (10:2). The same phrase was already used in 4:18. Mark in 3:16 writes, "Simon whom he surnamed Peter (*epetheke to S. onoma P.*), and Lk. 6:14 runs: "Simon whom he named (*onomase*) Peter." As could be expected in the list of Acts 1:13, "Peter" without Simon is given.

⁷The translation of the word Cephas into the Greek **Petros** "confirms the fact," writes O. Cullmann (**Peter**, tr. from German, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953, p. 19) "that the word is not a proper name; proper names are not translated." In order to preserve the original impact of the word Cephas, Cullmann suggests that it must be translated as "rock," and not as "Peter." Instead of "Simon Peter," we should read "Simon Rock" (see his **Peter**, p. 20 and his article in **Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament**, vol. VI, p. 100).

Only at the end of the second century was **Petros** used as a proper name. A rabbi was indentified as "son of Petros" (Strack and Billerbeck, **Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch**, I, 530, quoted by John Lowe, **Saint Peter**, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 7-8). As a Christian name it first appears in Tertullian (*Ibid.*).

⁸A. Wikenhausen, **New Testament Introduction**, tr. from the German, New York: Herder and Herder, 1958, p. 493. For the view that the memory of the moment when the name was given is lost, see O. Cullmann, **Peter**, pp. 21, 177.

⁹A. Edersheim, **The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, London, 1896, vol. II, p. 83.

¹⁰O. Cullmann is of the opinion that Matt. 16:17-19 does not belong to the story of Peter's confession but to the Passion story (**Peter**, pp. 170ff.).

While Johannes Munck agrees with Cullmann that these words of Jesus do not originally belong to the event described in Matt. 16, he nevertheless thinks that Cullmann "has not succeeded in showing convincingly that the words were originally part of the story of the Passion" (**Paul and the Salvation of Mankind**, London: SCM Press, 1959, p. 63, fn. 3). Munck considers Lk. 24:34 and I Cor. 15:5 as "the outer framework" of Matt. 16 (*Ibid.*, p. 63). On the other hand, Fr. Nicolas Afanassieff in an important essay, "L'Apôtre Pierre et l'Evêque de Rome," in **Theologie**, vol. XXVI, 1955, pp. 3-35, looks upon this problem in a completely different perspective, in terms of eucharistic ecclesiology, and refuses to ascribe these verses either to the narrative of the Passion or to the pronouncement of the Risen Lord (pp. 13-17). And Joseph Ludwig (**Die Primatworte Mt. 16:18-19 in der Altkirchlichen Exegese**, in **Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen**, XIX, 4, 1952, p. 6) writes as follows: "Glaube, Kirche, Opfer: das ist der innerste Kreis des Lebens Jesu, und wenn eins seiner Worte 'den Sitz im Leben' hat, dann Mt. 16:18-19."

¹¹O. Cullmann, in **TWNT**, p. 98.

¹²Dem. **Evang.** 3, 5, in H. Smith, **op. cit.**, vol. III, pp. 149-50.

¹³In "the first Petrine passage" which comes before the confession in the district of Caesarea Philippi, we do not have an indication that Peter is above the other apostles. It is true that Peter walked on water, but it is also stated that he was afraid, began to sink, and that Christ said to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:22-32). It is quite obvious that the material of Matthew which follows the confession of Peter is not "reedited" in favor of Peter, especially the Passion narrative. After Jesus' promise to Peter, the apostle does not appear in a more favorable light. Let us take the event of the anointing at Bethany. In Mk. 14:4 we read that when a woman broke an alabaster jar and poured it over Jesus' head, "there were some (tines) who said to themselves indignantly, 'Why was the ointment thus wasted?'" In Matt. 26:8, however, it is implied that not some but the whole body of the disciples were indignant. Whether the "some" in Mk. includes Peter we may only guess; "the disciples," Matthew suggests, were not able to perceive the meaning of the anointment. "In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial" (Matt. 26:12), explains Jesus to His disciples.

John in his Gospel makes it quite clear that Peter is one with the Twelve in knowing and misunderstanding Jesus' actions as well as His words. When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, for instance, Peter does not see any relation between this event and Christ's death and glory on the cross. First Peter refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet; then he accepted with an enthusiasm which reflected misunderstanding of Jesus' words (Jn. 13:5-10). When Jesus humbled himself by washing the feet of His disciples, he also showed that the twelve were equal (see *Msg. Cassien, "Saint Pierre et l'église dans le Nouveau Testament (le problème de la primauté)" Istina*, No. 3, 1955, p. 289).

¹⁴J. Munck, **op. cit.**, p. 110.

¹⁵A. Edersheim, **op. cit.**, p. 81.

¹⁶D. J. Chapman, in an article published in **Revue Benedictine** 29, 1912, with the title "St. Paul and the Revelation to St. Peter, Matt. 16:17," pp.

133-147, argues that the comparison which Paul made between his own apostolate and Peter's, which is expressed Gal. 2:8-9, is really anticipated in Gal. 1:12,15,16. These verses of the first chapter of Galatians are also references to Paul's vision on the road to Damascus. In Gal. 1:17-2:10, Paul makes known that his knowledge of Christ is not given by flesh and blood but is revealed by the Father. He "presupposes the words (Matt. 16:16-17) to be perfectly familiar to his Galatian converts" (p. 141). Except in Gal. 2:7-8, Paul always uses the word Cephas, but here only Peter. Chapman suggests that the reason for this is that Paul has in mind "a Greek document, in which he found Simon Peter's confession, Our Lord's declaration that he was blessed in receiving this revelation" (p. 144). Using the name Peter in Gal. 2:7-8, Paul let it be known that "he was fully aware of Peter's position as the Rock" (**A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture**, New York, 1953, p. 1115).

¹⁷A. Edersheim, **op. cit.**, p. 81.

¹⁸Otto Bentz, "Felsenmann und Felsen-Gemeinde (Eine Parallele zu Mt. 16:17-19 in den Qumranpsalmen)," in **Zeitschrift fur die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft**, vol. 48, 1957, pp. 49-77. He considers Matt. 16:17-19 against the background of the group of images of the holy building in Qumran Thanksgiving Hymns (Hodayot). On the basis of this comparison, he comes to the conclusion that Jesus intended to build the church which would carry on his teaching and his work (p. 76).

¹⁹K. L. Schmidt, "The Church," in **ThWNT**, English translation, vol. I, p. 36.

²⁰**Ibid.**, p. 41.

²¹**Ibid.**, p. 48; Alan Richardson (ed.), **A Theological Word Book of the Bible**, p. 48.

²²**Smyr.** 8, 2.

²³PG 7, col. 966, as quoted by Y. Congar, **The Mystery of the Church**, London, 1960, p. 40.

²⁴J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word *ekklesia*," **Journal of Theological Studies**, vol. XLIX, 1948, p. 139.

²⁵See J. Munck, **op. cit.**, p. 216.

²⁶A. E. J. Rawlinson, "Corpus Christi," in **Mysterium Christi**, ed. by G. K. A. Bell and A. Deissmann, pp. 227, 230. Rawlinson writes that **soma** in the pre-Christian Greek usage does not denote the idea of a "body corporate," but simply "mass," "bulk" "body," without indicating its members. "St. Paul's use of the phrase **soma Christou** appears quite extraordinary" (p. 226). "The idea was in the mind of St. Paul a corollary of what to him was involved in the Eucharist" (p. 230). Similarly, **ekklesia** in the pre-Christian usage meant an assembly, or meeting, "and not the body of people which assembles or meets together" (J. Y. Campbell, **op. cit.**, p. 132).

²⁷N. Afanassieff, **op. cit.**, pp. 13, 21.

²⁸A. Fridrichsen, **The Apostle and His Message**, Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, 1947, 3, fn. 12, on p. 18. He sees "vestiges" in Jn. 21:15ff of Peter's call to be apostle to the Circumcised, and he adds that Matt. 16:19 may be taken as another form of the same tradition as John 21:15-17. See also H. Mosbech, "Apostolos in the New Testament," in **Studia Theologica**, vol. II, 1950, p. 182.

²⁹The words in Gal. 2:12, "certain men from James," J. Munck suggests, do not necessarily convey the idea that these men are sent by James with special authority. The phrase may be translated as "some Jerusalem church members." Therefore Gal. 2:12 does necessarily indicate that they came from Jerusalem, but may mean that "they may have been on a journey unconnected with church affairs," adds Munck. This author explains Peter's changing view, not as a proof of Peter's complete dependence upon the circumcision party, but as an indication that the problems which existed in the communities composed of Jews and Gentiles were not yet settled. In this case the event described in Gal. 2:1-10 would not refer to the meeting in Jerusalem in Acts 15. Peter at Antioch was confronted with an unsettled problem unknown in Jerusalem before the council of the apostles (p. 102).

³⁰Charles Journet, *Primaute de Pierre dans la perspective protestante et dans la perspective catholique*, Paris, 1953, pp. 74-76. He states here repeatedly that in Matt. 16:18 Jesus had in mind the universal church, and the power over this church was given to Peter as his personal privilege. Peter received "un privilege transapostolique," which is manifested in his primacy over the universal church.

³¹T. W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950, pp. 53-54.

³²H. Mosbech, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

³³Karl Heinrich Rengstorf writes ("Apostleship," in TWNT, English translation, in *Bible Key Words*, vol. II, New York, 1958, p. 42) that the resurrection of Jesus produced "the renewal of their commission as apostles in its final form" (Matt. 28:16ff, Lk. 24:48 f, Acts 1:8).

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 44, "the missionary element fundamentally differentiates the New Testament apostleship from the Jewish *shaliyah* institution."

³⁵T. W. Manson, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

³⁶Honors in the Kingdom are not equal, writes Chrysostom. The three disciples were preeminent above the rest, "and among these three again there was a great difference. For this is a very exact method observed by God even to the last. Hence 'one star differeth from another star in glory' (I Cor. 15:41) it says. And yet all were Apostles and all are to sit on twelve thrones, and all left their goods, and all companied with Him; still it was the three He took... and He sets Peter before them, when He says, 'Lovest thou Me more than these?' (Jn. 21:15). And John too was loved even above the rest" (Hom. XXXI on *Romans*, in NPNF, vol. XI). From this quotation and from what immediately follows it, it is clear that we have here no primacy of power or authority, but preeminence of honor.

³⁷T. W. Manson, *op. cit.*, p. 55. C. H. Dodd, in *According to the Scripture* (New York, 1953, pp. 58-59, fn. 1) formulates this problem as follows: "The mere death of an apostle need not have created a vacancy: *en te palingenesia* he would be there to take his throne, but apostacy is a different matter."

³⁸In Hom. III on the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in connection with Matthias' choice, Chrysostom comments that Peter did not make appointments. He acted as "expositor, not as preceptor." Peter, writes Chrysostom, "does everything with the common consent, nothing imperiously" (NPNF, vol. 11, pp. 18-19).

39C. H. Turner, "Apostolic Succession," in H. B. Swete, **Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry**, London, 1918, pp. 95-142.

40Ibid., p. 140. See Sergius Boulgakoff, "The Hierarchy and the Sacraments," in **The Ministry and the Sacraments**, ed. by R. Dunkerley, New York, 1937, pp. 95-123. He states that "the Church is called **Apostolic**, not only because it has the apostolic succession of episcopal ordination, but also with reference to the whole fullness of apostolic tradition. And apostolic succession in this latter sense applies to the **whole** church and not only to the hierarchy...the apostles founded the Christian hierarchy not only in their capacity of first bishops but in all the fullness of their apostleship, which cannot as such be transferred to anybody" (p. 98). All gifts were given to the **whole** church, and "the church was able to differentiate various organs for the fulfilment of specific functions and to establish hierarchy... hierarchy exists in and for the church, and is not over, it; it is an organ of the church, endowed with special powers" (p. 103).

41N. Afanassieff, **op. cit.**, p. 30, and see Jean Meyendorff, "Sacraments et Hierarchie dans l'Eglise," in **Dieu vivant**, 26, p. 87.

42O. Cullmann, **Peter**, pp. 159, 161, 195; J. Lowe, **op. cit.**, p. 64. Y. Congar, **op. cit.**, p. 144, "the first bishop of Rome to appeal to the famous text of Matt. 16:18 was Callistus in his edict of indulgence (ca. 220)... for many centuries, it was far from playing such a prominent role in ecclesiology as it is made to do now." But Congar adds that the importance and significance of Matt. 16:18 "were only gradually perceived or, at least, expressed."

43J. Ludwig, **op. cit.**, p. 11.

44In **Ante-Nicene Fathers** (ANF), vol. III, p. 253.

45ANF, vol. IV, pp. 98-99.

46Ibid., p. 99.

47Also see Tertullian on Monogamy 8, "Peter alone do I find — through (the mention of) his 'mother-in-law' — to have been married Monogamist I am led to presume him by consideration of the Church, which, built upon him, was destined to appoint every grade of her order from monogamists" (ANF, vol. IV, p. 65).

48J. H. Bernard, "The Cyprianic Doctrine of the Ministry," in H. B. Swete, **op. cit.**, p. 246. The author of this essay quotes Hugo Koch's **Cyprian und der Romische Primat** (Texte und Untersuchungen, Leipzig, 1910): "Dass es Einer war... ist ihm die Hauptsache; dass dieser Eine gerade Petrus war, ist Nebensache" (p. 11).

For Cyprian there is only one Church, and this one church is built upon one man; although Christ gave equal power to all the apostles, by His authority He ordered the unity of the church by making it begin from a single man.

49Besides the version summarized in the previous note, there exists another text of **De Unit. Eccl. 4**, which asserts the primacy of Peter and does not mention that the other apostles are equal with him, either in authority or in honor. Where does this version of **De Unit. Eccl. 4** come from? It is most probable, according to J. N. Kelly, that this text also was written by Cyprian before he started his dispute with Pope Stephen. In opposing Stephen's claim to primacy, Cyprian clarified his view. Even the so-called "Papal version," writes J. N. Kelly, "does not necessarily conflict with his general teaching,

viz., that the Church's unity is to be found in the consensus of all the collective episcopate" (**Early Christian Doctrines**, New York: Harper, 1958, pp. 205-6).

⁵⁰Origen, on Matthew, XII, 9, in H. Smith, **op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 148.

⁵¹**Ibid.**, XII, 10, in H. Smith, **op. cit.**, vol. III, pp. 151-2.

⁵²**Ex. Hom. V**, 4; **John, Tome V** (fragment 107 from Eusebius, **H. E. VI**, 25); **First Principles III, II**, 5, in H. Smith, **op. cit.**, vol. III, p.156.

⁵³J. Ludwig notices that this exegesis was based upon I Cor. 10:4 and Rom. 10:9 (**op. cit.**, p. 54). Whereas Origen as well as Eusebius start from I Cor. 10:4, "the rock was Christ," the Antiochean exegesis of Matt. 16:18 rests probably upon Rom. 10:9: 'If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' Thus Chrysostom in Hom. 54, 3, **On Matthew**, gives us this interpretation: "'Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my Church,' that is on the faith of his confession."

⁵⁴In **Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers**, vol. 10, pp. 493-494.

⁵⁵Ep. 2 (8) in **ANF**, vol. V, p. 280, and in fn. 9 the translator comments that this quotation from Cyprian was interpreted in various ways. The most likely explanation of it is that it is an allusion to Peter's denial. Some scholars, however, connect Jn. 21:17 directly with I.k. 22:32. By linking these two verses they indicate that when Christ granted forgiveness to Peter, He reminded him not to forget now his brethren whom he was supposed to strengthen.

⁵⁶**Orat.** 39, 18.

⁵⁷In Hoskyns, **op. cit.**, p. 557.

⁵⁸J. N. Kelly, **op. cit.**, p. 408.

⁵⁹Ep. 77, in **NPNF**, vol. 3, p. 273.



St. Peter in Byzantine Theology

by John Meyendorff

During the middle ages both the Christian West and East produced an abundant literature on St. Peter and his succession. They generally drew from the same scriptural and patristic store of texts. However, these texts, first isolated and then artificially regrouped by polemicists, can only recover their real significance if we regard them in a historical perspective and, more especially, within the framework of a consistent and well balanced ecclesiology. It is this work of "resourcement" and intergration which ecumenical thought faces today if it is to reach any concrete result. We will attempt here, in a brief study of the Byzantine texts concerning St. Peter, to find out whether we may discern permanent elements of an ecclesiology in the attitude of the Byzantines towards the New Testament texts on Peter, towards the tradition on the specific ministry of the "Coryphaeus", and finally towards the Roman conception of his succession.

In our work, we shall limit ourselves to the medieval literature subsequent to the schism between the East and the West. At first glance, such a choice of period, when the positions were already clearly formulated, might seem, to be unfavorable for our purpose. Were not the minds of the writers then engaged in a sterile conflict? Were they still capable of an objective interpretation of Scripture and Tradition? Did they actually contribute to a real solution of the Petrine problem?

We will try to show that despite the inevitable exaggerations of polemical writings, our Byzantine documents authentically reflect the position of the Orthodox Church in regard to Roman ecclesiology, and have, as such, the value of a testimony very little known, often unpublished, and therefore ignored by a great number of contemporary theologians. In their attitude toward Peter and the Petrine tradition the Byzantine writers actually repeat the views of the Greek Fathers, notwithstanding the impact of contemporary problems upon their arguments. This rigid conservatism explains,

to a certain extent, why the development of the Roman primacy in the West remained unnoticed for such a long time in the East. The Eastern Churches had always recognized the particular authority of Rome in ecclesiastical affairs, and at Chalcedon had emphatically acclaimed Pope Leo as a successor of Peter, a fact which did not prevent them from condemning the monothelite Pope Honorius at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681. Even in the ninth century they had not realized that their previous acclamations were being interpreted in Rome as formal definitions of the Roman right to a **primatus protestatis**.

The Byzantines unanimously recognized the great **authority** of the old Rome, but never understood this authority in the sense of an absolute **power**. The prestige of Rome was not due, in their eyes, only to the "Petrine" character of this church. Indeed the famous Canon 28 of Chalcedon was for them one of the essential texts for the organization of the Church: "It is for right reasons, that the Fathers accorded privileges to old Rome, for this city was the seat of the Emperor and Senate..." The Roman authority was thus the result of both an ecclesiastical **consensus** and of those **historical realities**, which the Church fully recognized as relevant to her own life, namely, the existence of a Christian Empire. The fact of the Pope's traditional definition as the successor of Peter was by no means denied, but it was not considered as a decisive issue. In the East there were numerous "apostolic sees": was not Jerusalem the "mother of all the Churches"? Could not the Bishop of Antioch claim also the title **of the** successor to Peter? These churches, however, occupied the third and the fourth rank in the hierarchy of "privileged" churches, as established by Canon 6 of Nicaea. But the reason why the Roman Church had been accorded an incontestable precedence over all other apostolic churches was that its Petrine and Pauline "apostolicity" was in fact added to the city's position as the capital city, and only the conjunction of both these elements gave the Bishop of Rome the right to occupy the place of a primate in the Christian world with the **consensus** of all the churches.⁽¹⁾.

As we have said, the Christian East for a long time did not realize that in Rome this primacy of authority and influence was being progressively transformed into a more precise claim. Our task here will be to analyze the reaction of the Byzantines, when they finally understood the real nature of the problem, when they

realized that the quarrel over the **Filioque** was not the only factor of opposition between the two halves of the Christian World. and, moreover, that the solution of this dogmatic quarrel was impossible without a common ecclesiological criterion.

Such is the broad historical situation in which the problem of Peter was finally perceived by the Christians of the East. In their conception of the nature of primacy in the Church, the idea of "apostolicity" played a relatively unimportant role, since in itself it did not determine the real authority of a church⁽²⁾. In the East, the **personal ministry of Peter** and the problem of his **succession** were therefore two distinct questions.

Two categories of documents present a special interest in this field: 1) texts with an exegesis of the classical scriptural passages concerning Peter, and homilies for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29)⁽³⁾. 2) Anti-Latin polemical texts. In this latter category a distinction must be made between writings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on one hand, and the more elaborated texts of the great theologians of the fourteenth and fifteenth on the other.

(1) **Exegetes and preachers.**

One can safely assert that this category of Byzantine documents was not influenced at all by the schism between East and West. Greek scholars and prelates continued the tradition of the Fathers without the slightest alteration.

It would be impossible for us here to deal extensively with patristic exegeses of the various New Testament **logia** dealing with Peter⁽⁴⁾. We will therefore limit ourselves by referring to Origen the common teacher of the Greek fathers in the field of biblical commentary. Origen gives an extensive explanation on Matt. XVI, 18. He rightly interprets the famous words of Christ as a consequence of the **confession** of Peter on the road of Caesarea Philippi: Simon became the Rock, on which the Church is founded, because he expressed the true belief in the divinity of Christ. Thus, according to Origen, all those saved by faith in Jesus Christ receive also the keys of the Kingdom: in other words, the successors of Peter are all believers. "If we also say," he writes, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, then we also become Peter (**ginometha Petros**)..., for whoever assimilates to Christ, becomes the Rock (**Petra**). Does Christ give the keys of the Kingdom to Peter alone, whereas other blessed people cannot receive them?"⁽⁵⁾.

This same interpretation implicitly prevails in all the patristic texts dealing with Peter: the great Cappadocians, St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustin all concur in affirming that the faith of **Simon** made it possible for him to become the Rock on which the Church is founded and that in a certain sense all those who share the same faith are his successors. This same idea is to be found in later Byzantine writers. "The Lord gives the keys to Peter," says Theophanes Kerameus, a preacher of the twelfth century, "and to all those who resemble him, so that the gates of the Kingdom of heaven remain closed for the heretics, yet are easily accessible to the faithful"⁽⁶⁾. In the fourteenth century, Callistus I, Patriarch of Constantinople (1350-1353, 1354-1363), in a homily for the Feast of Orthodoxy, gives the same interpretation of the words of Christ to Peter⁽⁷⁾. Other examples could easily be found.

On the other hand, a very clear patristic tradition sees the succession of Peter in the episcopal ministry. The doctrine of St. Cyprian of Carthage on the "See of Peter" as being present in every local church, and not only in Rome, is well known⁽⁸⁾. It is also found in the East, among people who certainly never read the *De unitate ecclesiae* of Cyprian, but who share its main idea, thus witnessing to it as a part of the catholic tradition of the Church. St. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, affirms that Christ "through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of heavenly honors"⁽⁹⁾, and the author of the *Areopagitica*, when speaking of the "hierarchs" of the Church, refers immediately to the image of St. Peter⁽¹⁰⁾. A careful analysis of Byzantine ecclesiastical literature, including such documents as Lives of Saints, would certainly show that this tradition is a persistent one, and indeed it belongs to the essence of Orthodox ecclesiology to consider any local bishop to be the teacher of his flock and therefore to fulfill sacramentally, through the apostolic succession, the office of the first true believer, Peter.

In the correspondence and the encyclicals of a man like St. Athanasius I, patriarch of Constantinople (1289-1293, 1303-1310), one can find numerous references to evangelical texts, mainly Joh. 21 as pertaining to the episcopal office⁽¹¹⁾. His contemporary, Patriarch John XIII (1315-1319), in a letter to the emperor Andronicus II, declared that he accepted the patriarchal throne of Byzantium only after an apparition of Christ, addressing him as he once addressed the first apostle: "If thou lovest me, Peter, feed my sheep"⁽¹²⁾. All this shows quite clearly that both the ecclesiasti-

cal conscience of the Byzantines and their devotion to St. Peter express the relation between the pastoral ministry of the first Apostle and the episcopal ministry in the Church.

It is therefore comprehensible why, even after the schism between East and West, Orthodox ecclesiastical writers were never ashamed of praising the "coryphaeus" and of recognizing his preeminent function in the very foundation of the Church. They simply did not consider this praise and recognition as relevant in any way to the papal claims, since any bishop, and not only the pope, derives his ministry from the ministry of Peter.

The great Patriarch Photius is the first witness to the amazing stability in Byzantium of the traditional patristic exegesis. "On Peter," he writes, "repose the foundations of the faith" (13). "He is the coryphaeus of the Apostles" (14). Even though he betrayed Christ, "he was not deprived of being the chief of the apostolic choir, and has been established as the rock of the Church and is proclaimed by the Truth to be keybearer of the Kingdom of heaven" (15). One can also find expressions in which Photius aligns the foundation of the Church with the confession of Peter. "The Lord" he writes "has entrusted to Peter the keys of the Kingdom as a reward for his right confession, and on his confession he laid the foundation of the Church". (15) Thus, for Photius, as for the later Byzantine theologians, the polemical argument artificially opposing Peter to his confession did not exist. By confessing his faith in the Divinity of the Saviour, Peter became the Rock of the Church. The Council of 879-880, which followed the reconciliation between Photius and John VIII, went even so far as to proclaim: "The Lord placed him at the head of all Churches, saying,... 'Feed my sheep'" (17).

Was this mere rhetoric, of which the Byzantines, to be sure, often abused? The title of "coryphaeus", for example, is often given not only to Peter, but also to other Apostles, especially Paul and John, and does not have a particular meaning. But it is obviously impossible to explain by rhetoric the persistence of an extremely realistic exegesis of the scriptural texts concerning Peter; the "Coryphaeus" was held to be an essential ecclesiastical function.

Peter, Patriarch of Antioch, in a letter to Michael Cerularios, repeats, for example, the expressions of Photius when he says that "the great Church of Christ is build on Peter" (18). We find even more explicit texts in Theophylact of Bulgaria, who, at the beginning

of the twelfth century, composed commentaries on the Gospels. Explaining Lk. 22, 32-33, he puts in the mouth of Christ the following words: "Since I make thee the chief (*exarchos*) of my disciples (after this thou wilt deny me, thou wilt cry and thou wilt come back to repentance), reaffirm the others; for thus it behoves for thee to act, thou being, after me, the rock and the foundation of the Church. One must think that this was said", continues Theophylact, "not only about the disciples who lived then, that they might recover in Peter their foundation, but all the faithful till the end of the ages..." After his denial Peter "received again, because of his repentance, the primacy over all and the presidency of the universe". (19).

Theophylact also insists on the fact that the words of Christ in Joh. 21 are addressed personally to Peter: "The Lord," he says, "entrusts to Peter the presidency over the sheep in the world, to nobody else, but him" (20). Elsewhere, he writes: "If James received the throne of Jerusalem, Peter was made the teacher of the universe" (21). In this last text one clearly discerns a conscientious theological thought, not mere rhetoric, in the distinction between the functions of James and those of Peter. We shall later see that this distinction is essential in the Byzantine conception of the Church.

The expressions of Photius and Theophylact were taken over by many others, such as Theophanes Kerameus and, in Russia, St. Cyril of Turov. Arsenius, a famous patriarch of Constantinople (1255-59, 1261-67), is also no exception to the rule, when he writes: "He is indeed blessed, Peter, the Rock (*petros tes petras*) on which Christ has established the Church" (22).

In the fourteenth century, St. Gregory Palamas is to use the same terms. Peter is the Coryphaeus, the "first of the Apostles." In his sermon for the Feast of June 29, Gregory goes even farther and compares Peter to Adam. By giving to Simon the name of "Peter" and by building "on him" his Church, Christ has made him the "father of the race of the true worshippers of God". Like Adam, Peter was exposed to the temptation by the devil, but his fall was not a final one; he repented and was restored by Christ to the dignity of "pastor, the supreme pastor of the whole Church." (23) Palamas is explicit in opposing Peter to the other apostles. "Peter," he writes, "belongs to the choir of the apostles, and yet is distinct from the others, because he bears a higher title." (24) He is, indeed,

their personal "corypheaus" and the "foundation of the Church." (25)

It is not difficult to present an abundance of such quotations. All Byzantine theologians, even after the conflict with Rome, speak of Peter in the same terms as Photius and Theophylact, without any attempt to attenuate the meaning of biblical texts. Their quiet assurance proves once more that they did not think of these texts as being an argument in favor of Roman ecclesiology, which they moreover ignored, and the "logic" of which was totally alien to Eastern Christianity. The following points, however, seemed evident to them:

1) Peter is the "coryphaeus" of the apostolic choir; he is the first disciple of Christ and speaks always on behalf of all. It is true that other apostles, John, James and Paul, are also called "coryphaei" and "primates", but Peter alone is the "rock of the Church." His primacy has, therefore, not only a personal character, but bears an ecclesiological significance.

2) The words of Jesus on the road to Cesarea Philippi, — "On this rock I will build up my Church," — are bound to the confession of Peter. The Church exists in history because man believes in Christ, the Son of God; without this faith, there can be no Church. Peter was the first to confess this faith, and has thus become the "head of theologians," to use an expression of the Office of June 29; he has received the messianic title of the "Rock," a title which in biblical language belongs to the Messiah himself. To the extent, however, that this title depends on a man's faith, a man can also lose it. This is what happened to Peter, and he had to undergo tears of repentance before he was reestablished in his title.

3) The Byzantine authors consider that the words of Christ to Peter (Math. 16, 18) possess a final and eternal significance. Peter is a mortal man, but the Church "against which the gates of hell cannot prevail," remains eternally founded on Peter.

(2) Polemicists of the twelfth to Thirteenth Centuries.

As we may easily imagine, the Byzantine anti-Latin texts are far from being all of equal value, and it is not always possible to deduce from them a consistent ecclesiology. A vast number deal with the controversy over the **Filioque**, ignoring altogether the problem of Peter and of his succession. This problem, however, became unavoidable when Byzantine theologians and prelates found themselves face to face with the reformed and tremendously strengthened Papacy

of the twelfth century. The first serious encounter occurred when the Emperor Manuel Comnenus initiated a policy of ecclesiastical union with the hope of recovering for himself the old universal Roman imperial power over both East and West. Manuel was tempted, therefore, to recognize the Western theory of the Roman primacy as being of divine origin, but he faced the strong opposition of Patriarch Michael of Anchialus (1170-1177). Peter, affirmed the patriarch, was a "universal teacher," who established bishops not only in Rome, but also in Antioch and Jerusalem, which have much more "divine" reasons to become the center of the universal Church than does Rome; the Roman primacy was a canonical establishment, conditioned by the orthodoxy of the Roman bishops; after their fall into heresy, it was transferred to the "new Rome", Constantinople. Almost the same argument is stressed by another Greek theologian of the period, Andronicus Camaterus^(25 bis). It is clear, therefore, that the reaction of the Byzantine theologians was determined by an ecclesiology which implied a different conception of the succession of Peter.

In the period immediately following the Latin capture of Constantinople (1204), when Rome for the first time decided to appoint bishops to oriental sees, and more particularly to Constantinople, this reaction became stronger. These appointments, made by Innocent III, presented the Byzantines with the challenge of Roman ecclesiology on a practical level. The Greeks could no longer believe that the claims of Ancient Rome were not really able to alter the old canonical procedure of episcopal election, or that Roman centralization could not be extended beyond the limits of the West.

Historians have more than once described the disastrous effect of the Crusades upon the relations between Christians of East and West. The mutual accusations turned into a real uprising of hatred after the capture of Constantinople by the Westerners in 1204. As is known, Innocent III began by solemnly protesting against the violence of the Crusaders, but finally he decided to profit from the given situation and to act in the same way in which his predecessors had acted in other eastern territories reconquered from the Moslems. He appointed a Latin Patriarch to Constantinople. This action appeared to the whole Christian East not only as a religious sanction of the conquest, but as a sort of theological justification of aggression. The election of a Latin Emperor in Byzantium could still be interpreted as being in conformity with the laws of war,

but by virtue of what right or custom was the Patriarch of the West appointing his own candidate, the Venetian Thomas Morosini, to the See of St. John Chrysostom?

In all the anti-Latin documents of that period we see mention of this so-called "right" of the Pope, a right of which the Eastern Church had no knowledge. Thus, this action of Innocent III was the starting point of a polemic against the primacy of Rome. All of a sudden the East became aware of an ecclesiological development which had taken place in the West and which it was much too late to stop.

Several short documents, all directly connected with the appointment of Thomas Morosini, reveal to us the shock felt by the Orientals:

1) A letter to Innocent III by the legitimate Patriarch of Constantinople John Camateros (1198-1206) who took refuge at Nicaea after the fall of the capital city⁽²⁶⁾.

2) A treatise, wrongly attributed to Photius and entitled "Against those who say that Rome is the first See."⁽²⁷⁾

3) Two writings of the learned Deacon Nicholas Mesarites, very similar in their contents to the pseudo-Photian treatise: the first in the form of a dialogue with Morosini (a dialogue that actually took place in Constantinople on Aug. 30, 1206)⁽²⁸⁾; the second, a pamphlet written when Nicholas already became archbishop of Ephesus⁽²⁹⁾.

4) The letter of a patriarch of Constantinople, whose name is unknown, to his colleague in Jerusalem⁽³⁰⁾.

5) An article by an unknown Greek author: "Why has the Latin overcome us?", attacking the appointment of Morosini with particular violence⁽³¹⁾.

These writings are interesting to the extent that they reflect the first reaction of the Greek theologians to the Papacy. Their argumentation is not always mature; for example, some of them (Mesarites, Pseudo-Photius and the author of the anonymous pamphlet) try, for the first time, to oppose the apostolicity of Constantinople, supposedly founded by St. Andrew, to that of Rome. F. Dvornik has recently proved the very late origin of the legend on which this conception is based; in any case, the argument was quite irrelevant for the Byzantines, whose really strong and Orthodox point against Rome was a different concept of apostolicity itself^(31 bis).

All the documents present arguments concerning the primacy of Peter among the Twelve and deal with the problem of his succession. The Patriarch's letters insist especially on the first point. The anonymous pamphlet, on the contrary, completely rejects the primacy of Peter, an extreme position, unique, it would seem, in all of Byzantine literature. As to Nicholas Mesarites, although he uses as a subsidiary argument the legend of St. Andrew, he rightly bases his main argument on the fact that the Orthodox attitude is not a rejection of the primacy, but an interpretation of the succession of Peter which differed from the one given by the Latins.

All the authors, with the exception of the writer of the anonymous pamphlet, call Peter "first disciple", "coryphaeus" and "rock." But John Camateros makes an effort to minimize the scope of these titles by opposing them to other texts of the New Testament; the Church is not founded on Peter alone, but on the "apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2, 20); if Peter is the "first" and the "coryphaeus," Paul is the "chosen instrument" (Acts 9, 15), while James had the first place at the Council of Jerusalem. The unknown Patriarch of Constantinople, in his letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, goes even further in his attempt to belittle the role of Peter: "It is impossible," he writes, "for a body to be deprived of its head, and for the Church to be a body without a head," but its Head is Christ. "The head newly introduced by the Latins not only is superfluous, but it brings confusion within the body and is a danger for it."⁽³²⁾ The Romans therefore have the disease from which the church of Corinth suffered when Paul wrote to it that neither Cephas, nor Paul, or Apollos, but Christ Himself is the Head.

These arguments against the primacy of Peter, arguments which subsequent Orthodox polemicists were to make their own, give, however, no positive explanation of the role of Peter. Therefore, other parts of patriarchal letters, more ecclesiological in their tenor, are of greater importance for us.

We must first note here the essential distinction made between the function of the apostles and that of the episcopal ministry in the Church; the function of Peter, as that of the other apostles, was to be a witness for the whole world, whereas the episcopal ministry is limited to a single local church. We have already seen this distinction in the writings of Theophylact of Bulgaria. According to John Camateros, Peter is the "universal doctor." However, he adds, the apostolic council in Jerusalem assigned to Peter the apostolate to

the circumcized, but this limitation was not a geographic one; one should not, therefore identify the function of Peter with that of the Bishop of Rome, or bind it with Rome alone.⁽³³⁾ The anonymous author of the anti-Latin pamphlet also insists that the apostolic function has never been limited to a specific place⁽³⁴⁾. The point is made even clearer in the letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: "Christ is the Pastor and the Master, and he has transferred the pastoral ministry to Peter. Yet we see today that all bishops have this very function; consequently, if Christ has accorded primacy to Peter when granting upon him the pastoral care, let this primacy be also recognized to the others, since they are pastors, and thus they will be all of them first."⁽³⁵⁾ The unknown patriarch interprets in the same way the confession of Peter and its consequences: "Simon has become Peter, the rock on which the church is being maintained, but others have also confessed the Divinity of Christ, and therefore are also rocks. Peter is but the first among them."⁽³⁶⁾

Thus the Byzantine theologians explain the New Testament texts concerning Peter within a more general ecclesiological context and more specifically in terms of a distinction between the episcopal ministry and the apostolic one. The apostles are different from the bishop insofar as the latter's function is to govern a single local church. Yet each local church has one and the same **fulness of grace**; all of them are the **Church in its totality**: the pastoral function is wholly present in every one, and all of them are established on Peter. We shall see how this point is to be developed by later Byzantine theologians; let us stress, here, that both John Camateros and the unknown writer of the letter to Jerusalem recognize an analogy between the primacy of Peter among the apostles and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome among the bishops.

Having recognized, [writes John Camateros] a certain analogy, similar to the one found in geometry, between the relations of Peter with the other disciples of Christ, on the one hand, and the relations of the church of the Romans with the other patriarchal sees, on the other hand, we must examine whether Peter implied and held in himself the other disciples of Christ and whether the choir of the disciples was subdued to him, obeyed him as a chief and a master, leaving thus to the Roman Church a similar universal primacy. But listening to the words of the Gospel, our embarrassment is clearly dissolved.⁽³⁷⁾

Here is the conclusion of Camateros: "We agree to honor Peter as the first disciple of Christ, to honor him more than the others

and to acclaim him as having been the head of the others; we venerate the Church of Rome as the first in rank and honor..., but we do not see that the Scriptures oblige us to recognize in it the mother of other churches or to venerate it as embracing other churches"(38). The unknown patriarch is approximately of the same opinion; he stresses the basic identity existing between all local churches and affirms: "We recognize Peter as corypheaus, in conformity with a necessary order. But Peter, not the Pope. For in the past the Pope was the first one among us, when his thought and mind were in agreement with ours. Let the identity of faith be reestablished and then let him receive the primacy"(39). In other words, the pope is the successor of Peter only if he remains in the faith of Peter.

In the writing of Nicholas Masarites and in the text attributed to Photius we find an identical idea, even more clearly expressed. Mesarites also distinguished the apostolate from the episcopate. He writes:

It is true that Peter, the coryphaeus of the disciples, went to Rome; there is in this nothing sensational or extraordinary; in Rome, as in other cities, he was a doctor, not a bishop. For Linus was indeed the first bishop of Rome, elected by the holy and divine apostolic college, and then Sixtus, and, in the third place, Clement, the holy martyr, whom Peter himself has appointed to the pontifical throne. It is not true, therefore, that Peter has ever been bishop of Rome. The Italians have made the universal teacher the bishop of one city(40).

And here is another even more explicit text:

You try to present Peter as teacher of Rome alone. While the divine Fathers spoke of the promise made to him by the Saviour as having a **catholic** meaning and as referring to all those who believed and believe; you force yourself into a narrow and false interpretation, ascribing it to Rome alone. If this were true, it would be impossible for every Church of the faithful, and not only that of Rome, to possess the Saviour properly, and for each church to be founded on the Rock, i. e. on the doctrine of Peter, in conformity with the promise.(41)

The doctrine of the succession of Peter in Rome only seems to Mesarites a Judaic narrowing of the redeeming grace. He writes:

If you oppose the text **Thou art Peter and on this rock I will establish my church**, etc, know that this was not said about the Church of Rome. It would be Judaic and miserable to limit the grace and its divinity by lands and countries,

denying to it the faculty of acting in an equal way in the whole world. When we speak of the Church One, Catholic and Apostolic, we do not mean, as does the provoking Roman ignorance, the Church of Peter or of Rome, of Byzantium or of Andrew, of Alexandria, Antioch or Palestine, we do not mean the Churches of Asia, of Europe or of Libya or the one on the northern side of the Bosphorus, but the Church which is spread in the whole universe.⁽⁴²⁾

Leaving aside the polemic bitterness of these texts, it is clear that, faced by Roman ecclesiology, Byzantine theologians defend the ontological identity and the equality in terms of grace of all local churches. To the Roman claim to universalism, based on an institutional center, they oppose the universalism of faith and grace. The grace of God is equally present in each Church of Christ, wherever "two or three are gathered in His name", i. e. wherever the Church of God exists in its sacramental and hierarchical fulness.

But then why was the Church of Rome vested with primacy among other Churches, a primacy "analogous" to the one that Peter had among the Apostles? The Byzantines had a clear answer to this question: this Roman primacy came not from Peter, whose presence had been more effective and better attested in Jerusalem or in Antioch than in Rome, but from the fact that Rome was the capital of the Empire. Here all Byzantine authors are in agreement: the 28th Canon of Chalcedon is for them an axiom. Nicholas Mesarites concedes, it is true, that Roman primacy belongs to an old pre-Constantinian tradition, older than the Christian Empire. It had already manifested itself during the trial of Paul of Samosate: the latter's condemnation by a Council of Antioch was first communicated to Rome. According to Mesarites, this primacy was established in order to give the Bishop of Rome a greater authority in defending the interests of the Church before the pagan Emperors⁽⁴³⁾. But whatever the historical inaccuracy of this scheme may be, Mesarites' essential idea is that the primacy of Rome, which was established by general consensus, is useful to the Church, but must depend on the confession of Orthodox faith.

The first reaction of the ecclesiastical consciousness in the East to the Western doctrine of primacy is therefore not an attempt to deny the primacy of Peter among the apostles, but to interpret it in terms of a concept of the Church, which differed from that which had developed in the West.

(3) The Theologians of Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

Several eminent Byzantine theologians dealt with the problem of Peter in the 14th and the 15th centuries. We will limit ourselves to only four of them: Barlaam the Calabrian, Nilus Cabasilas, Symeon of Thessalonica and Gennadios Scholarios. Their thought is more elaborate and more solid than the first reaction of the Greek theologians of the thirteenth century. The argument based on the legend of St. Andrew does not appear any more^(43 bis).

The writings of Barlaam the Calabrian, the famous adversary of St. Gregory Palamas during the Hesychast controversies, had great success in Byzantium; indeed, only his writings against Palamas were destroyed after the Council of 1341. The others, and particularly his anti-Latin treatises, were preserved and had a certain influence. Barlaam devoted three short treatises to the problem of St. Peter⁽⁴⁴⁾. They are in the strict Byzantine tradition. A Greek from southern Italy, Barlaam for a long time wanted to present himself as a fervent Orthodox.

His essential argument is that the primacy of Peter is not necessarily bound to the Church of Rome. Like the authors of the thirteenth century, he makes a clear distinction between the apostolate and the episcopal ministry. "No apostle," he writes, "has been appointed bishop in such or such city or land. They had everywhere the same power. As to the bishops, whom they ordained to succeed them, they were pastors in various cities and countries."⁽⁴⁵⁾ Barlaam then gives an interpretation of the episcopal consecration; if the Latins are right, he thinks, then "Clement was established by Peter as not only bishop of Rome, but also as pastor of the whole Church of God, to direct not only bishops, appointed by the other apostles, but those also whom the Coryphaeus himself appointed in other cities. But who has ever called Peter bishop of Rome and Clement — Coryphaeus? Since Peter, the coryphaeus of the apostles, has appointed many bishops in various cities, which law obliges the bishop of Rome alone to entitle himself the successor of Peter and to direct the others"?⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Barlaam defends the ontological identity of the churches, and consequently the equality of their bishops. Concerning the bishop of Rome, his conclusion is: "The Pope has two privileges: he is bishop of Rome and he is first among other bishops. He has received the Roman episcopacy from the divine Peter; as to the primacy of honor, he was honored with it much later by the pious Emperors

Constantine and Justinian and by divine Councils".⁽⁴⁷⁾ As bishop he is equal to the others: "Every orthodox bishop is the vicar of Christ and the successor of the apostles, so that, if all the bishops of the world detach themselves from the true faith and there remains but one guardian of the true dogmas,... it is in him that the faith of the divine Peter will be preserved".⁽⁴⁸⁾ Moreover, the apostolic and the episcopal functions being not identical, one cannot consider one single bishop as the successor of one apostle. "Bishops established by Peter are successors not only of Peter, but also of the other apostles; just as the bishops established by other apostles are successors of Peter."⁽⁴⁹⁾

This last point is typical of the East, where no particular significance has ever been attached to the "apostolicity" of certain local churches; were there not scores of episcopal sees pretending, often with full justification, to have been founded by the Apostles? Anyway the hierarchy of patriarchal sees was determined, not by their apostolicity, but by the authority which they were holding *de facto*. Rome held the first place only "for the good order of the Church," writes Barlaam.⁽⁵⁰⁾ And with the authors of the thirteenth century, he acknowledges a certain analogy between the apostolic choir and the episcopal college; in both cases there is one "first" who preserves "good order", granting that the choice of the first bishop belongs to the Emperors and the councils.

The works of Nilus Cabasilas, uncle of the famous Nicholas Cabasilas, who became archbishop of Thessalonica a few months before his death, are directly dependent on the writings of Barlaam. Usually he simply repeats the expressions of the Calabrian "philosopher" with some additional developments. Thus, he also mentions the two distinct privileges of the pope: the Roman episcopacy and the universal primacy. Like Barlaam he sees the origin of the primacy in the *Donatio Constantini*, the 28th Canon of Chalcedon and the reforms of Justinian. But he insists, using some new terms, on the more general problem of Peter's primacy. "Peter," he writes, "is at the same time apostle and chief (*exarchos*) of the apostles, while the pope is neither an apostle (the apostles having ordained pastors and teachers, but not apostles) nor the *Coryphaeus* of the apostles. Peter is a teacher of the whole world..., while the pope is but the bishop of Rome... Peter ordains the bishop of Rome, but the pope does not nominate his successor."⁽⁵¹⁾ To some Latins who say that "the pope is not the bishop of a city..., but simply bishop, being different

in this from the others,"⁽⁵²⁾ Nilus answers that Orthodoxy does not know bishops that would be "simply bishops", the episcopal dignity being directly connected with concrete functions in a local church.

In the light of such a doctrine of the church, Nilus interprets the words of Christ to Peter. If the pope is the Successor of Peter, in as much as he keeps the true faith, it is clear that the words of Christ concerning Peter no longer apply to him when he loses this faith. The true faith, however, can be preserved by other bishops; it is therefore obvious that the church of Rome is not the only one built on the Rock... The Church of Christ is established on the "theology" of Peter (i. e. on his confession of Christ as God), but all those who have the true faith profess this very theology⁽⁵³⁾. Nilus understands Matt. 16, 18 in the manner of Origen: every true believer is a successor of Peter, but, distinct in this from the Alexandrian theologian, he accepts the full significance of the visible structures of the Church. Origenist exegesis is thus integrated into an organic and sacramental ecclesiology. The guardians of truth and the successors of Peter are for him, as for Barlaam, the heads of the churches, i. e. the bishops. Each member of the Church is, to be sure, firmly rooted on the Rock, but precisely to the extent that he belongs to the ecclesiastic organism, of which the bishop is head. "There is nothing great in the see of Rome being called the apostolic throne, for each bishop is seated on the throne of Christ and is vested with a dignity higher than that of the angels."⁽⁵⁴⁾

In Symeon of Thessalonica, a theologian and liturgiologist of the fifteenth century, we have another witness to the Byzantine attitude towards Peter and the primacy. For him also the succession of Peter is the succession in the true faith: "One should not contradict the Latins, when they say that the bishop of Rome is the first. This primacy is not harmful to the Church. Let them only prove his faithfulness to the faith of Peter and to that of the successors of Peter. If it is so, let him enjoy all the privileges of Peter, let him be the first, the head, the chief of all and the supreme pontiff... Let the bishop of Rome be successor of the orthodoxy of Sylvester and Agathon, of Leo, Liberius, Martin and Gregory, then we also will call him Apostolic and the first among the other bishops; then we also will obey him, not only as Peter, but as the Saviour Himself."⁽⁵⁵⁾ Evidently these words of Symeon are not a

mere rhetorical exaggeration. Every Orthodox bishop, so long as he does not betray his episcopal dignity, is the image of Christ in his Church. The first among the bishops is no exception to the rule: he also is called to manifest the image of Christ in the functions which are entrusted to him, in this particular case, the primacy. It is in this sense that the **Epanagoge** of the ninth century speaks of the Patriarch of Constantinople as the “image of Christ”; this famous text, composed probably by Photius, certainly does not contest the role of other bishops as “images of Christ” in their own churches, but affirms that the particular function of the bishop of the capital city is to manifest this image beyond the limits of his diocese, in the life of the whole Empire.

According to Symeon, the function of primacy, which once belonged to the Bishop of Rome, has not disappeared in the Church. Within Christendom, as conceived by the Byzantines, the ancient capital city of the Empire has an intangible place, which it must recover once it returns to Orthodoxy, this being a political necessity as well as a religious one. “By no means did we reject the Pope,” writes Symeon; “it is not with the pope that we refuse to enter in communion. We are bound to him, as to Christ, and we recognize him as father and shepherd... In Christ, we are in communion and in an indissoluble communion with the Pope, with Peter, with Linus, with Clement...”⁽⁵⁶⁾ But the actual pope “in as much as he is no longer their successor in the faith, is no more the inheritor of their throne.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ In other words, he is no longer the Pope: “The one whom one calls Pope, will not be Pope as long as he has not the faith of Peter.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

In fact Symeon expresses here the doctrine of the charisms of the Spirit, a doctrine which has always been considered as obvious by Orthodox theologians. Each person can always become unworthy of the grace he has received and of the function to which the grace of the Holy Spirit has called him. His unworthiness does not suppress, however, either the gift or the function, which are essential to the life of the Church. The infallibility of the Church is therefore, in the last analysis, the faithfulness of God to His people and can never be identified with a personal infallibility, for God can force no one to be faithful to Him. Each bishop receives a grace sufficient for teaching and preserving the truth **in the Church**, in which he was made bishop. If he betrays his function

he loses it, but the function remains in the Church and will be assumed by others. This is exactly how Symeon of Thessalonica considers the function of primacy: it exists within the episcopal college, as it existed within the apostolic college, but it implies the unity of faith in the truth.

We find the same ecclesiological motivation expressed by the last of the great Byzantine theologians, and the first patriarch of Constantinople under Turkish dominion, Gennadios Scholarios. "Christ established the Church on Peter," he writes, "as to it being invincible by the gates of hell, i.e. by impiety and heresies, he grants this invincibility to the Church, not to Peter."⁽⁵⁹⁾ Peter is "Bishop and Shepherd of the universe," writes Scholarios, quoting the scriptural text,⁽⁶⁰⁾ but the same cannot be said of any of his successors, the bishops. In agreement with all the other Byzantine authors, Gennadios distinguishes between, on the one hand, the apostolic function, founded on an unique and exceptional Revelation, related to the historical event of Christ's Resurrection, and, on the other hand, the ministry of teaching entrusted within the Church to the bishops. Is not the Church "apostolic" because it was **founded** by the apostles and can add nothing to what has been revealed once and for all to the witnesses of the Resurrection? The Apostles were given the wisdom and the grace from the Word which is from above and the Spirit has spoken through them..., but once the foundation of the Church had been accomplished, it was not necessary for this grace to belong to the teachers, as once it belonged to the apostles... It was necessary for the Church not to appear diminished by the absence of that grace, or for the faith to receive a lesser help from the Holy Spirit; but to the teachers, faith was sufficient, and still today, it is sufficient to them."⁽⁶¹⁾

The fulness of Revelation, given in Christ, is transmitted to us by the Apostles. The Church preserves that Revelation in conformity with its own nature. A sacramental organism, it is solidly established on Peter, who confessed, on the road to Cesarea, the truth of the Incarnation. Wherever there is the fulness of this sacramental organism, there is Christ, there is the Church of God, established on Peter.

In this brief study we do not pretend that we have exhausted the content of the Byzantine writings concerning Peter. The texts that we have analyzed seem sufficient, however, to state the exis-

tence of a consensus among the principal Greek theologians of the Middle Ages on some specific points.

First, it is important to note that this consensus does not concern the problem of the personal primacy of Peter among the apostles. Some of the polemicists try to deny it, while the majority simply state that the power of the keys was also given to the other apostles, and that the privilege of Peter is really a primacy and not a power essentially different from that of the other apostles. This negative statement, however, does sufficiently explain all that the Bible means by the messianic image of the "Petrica" or the Rock, an image which Christ applies to Peter alone. The best theologians admit the personal importance of this biblical image and concentrate mainly on the problem of the **succession** of Peter. Nilus Cabasilas states clearly: "I do not find it necessary to investigate the authority of the blessed Peter in order to know, whether he was the head of the apostles and in which measure the holy apostles had to obey him. There can be here a freedom of opinion. But I affirm that it is not from Peter that the pope got his primacy over the other bishops. The pope has indeed two privileges: he is the bishop of Rome... and he is the first among the bishops. From Peter he has received the Roman episcopacy; as to the primacy, he received it much later from the blessed Fathers and the pious Emperors, for it was just that ecclesiastical affairs be accomplished in order."⁽⁶²⁾

For the whole patristic tradition, accepted also by the Byzantines, the succession of Peter depends on the confession of the true faith. The confession is entrusted to each Christian at his baptism, but a particular responsibility belongs, according to the doctrine of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, to those who occupy in each local church the very throne of Christ in apostolic succession, i. e. to the bishops. The responsibility belongs to every one of them, since each local church has the same fulness of grace. Thus the teaching of the Byzantine theologians agrees perfectly with the ecclesiology of St. Cyprian on the "Cathedra Petri": there is no plurality of episcopal sees, there is but one, the chair of Peter, and all the bishops, within the communities of which they are presidents, are seated, each one for his part, on this very chair.

Such is the essential notion of the succession of Peter in the Church in Orthodox ecclesiology. There exists, however, another succession, equally recognized by Byzantine theologians, but only

on the level of the analogy existing between the apostolic college and the episcopal college, this second succession being determined by the need for ecclesiastical order (*ekklesiastike evtaxia*). Its limits are determined by the Councils, and — in the Byzantine perspective — by the “very pious emperors.” There was a First within the apostolic college, and likewise there is a Primate among the bishops. This primacy is in a way a necessary development arising from all the measures taken by the Councils to insure “ecclesiastical order”: the establishment of metropolitan provinces, patriarchates, “autocephalies,” etc...

In the Orthodox perspective Roman ecclesiology appears therefore to have weighed disproportionately the “analogous” succession of the Coryphaeus in the person of a universal primate at the expense of the succession of Peter in the person of the Bishop of every local church. This lack of balance appeared little by little in history and may be explained by several historical reasons. The West can only restore this balance by a patient search of the tradition. Yet if the Orthodox are to help in this process, they must themselves initiate a careful study of their own tradition and truly become, in this particular sphere of ecclesiology, the authentic witnesses of the primitive Christian truth.

Notes

- 1) Cf my article **La Primaute romaine dans la tradition canonique jusqu'au concile de Chalcedoine**, in **Istina**, 1957, IV, pp. 463-482.
- 2) Cf. the remarkable chapter on apostolicity before Chalcedon in F. Dvor- nik, **The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew**, Cambridge, Mass., 1958, pp. 39-105.
- 3) Numerous texts have been gathered by M. Jugie, **Theologia dogmatica Christianorum orientalium**, vols. I and IV.
- 4) We may refer the reader to a recent and very comprehensive study of the subject by J. Ludwig, **Die Primatworte Mt, 16, 18, 19 in der altkirchlichen Exegese**, Munster, Westf., 1952.
- 5) **Hom. in Mat.** XII, 10, ed. Klostermann, Leipzig, 1935 (G. C. S. 40), pp. 85-89 (PG. XIII, 997-1004).
- 6) **Hom. LV**, PG CXXXII, 965 A.
- 7) The homily is unpublished; its text is to be found in a manuscript of Patmos (**Patm.** 366, fol. 412 v).

8) Cf. in particular A. d'Ales, **La theologie de S. Cyprien**, Paris, 1922, pp. 91-218; P.-Th. Camelot, **Saint Cyprien et la Primaute**, dans **Istina**, 1957, IV, pp. 421-434.

9) **De castigatione**, PG, XLVI, 312 C.

10) **De eccl. hier.**, VII, 7 PG, III, 561-564

11) **Letter to Andronicus II**, Vat. gr. 2219, fol. 41 v; **Letter to Bishops**, ibid., fol. 122 v; **Letter to the Metropolitan of Apameia**, ibid., fol. 128; **Instructions to Bishops**, ibid., fol. 133 v. fol. 154; **Encyclica**, ibid., fol 187 v; **Letter to the Monks of Athos**, ibid., fol. 266.

12) Pachimeres, **De Andronico Pal.**, V, 6, ed. Bonn, II, p. 381.

13) **Epist. 99 ad Niceph.**, PG, CII, 909 A.

14) **Epist. I ad Nicolaum**, PG, CII, 585 C; cf. **Hom. II on Good. Friday**, in C. Mango, **The Homilies of Photius**, Cambridge, Mass., 1958, p. 59.

15) **Hom. I**, in C. Mango, op. cit., p. 50. Almost the same expression are used by Photius in a solemn speech delivered to the council of 867 which condemned Pope Nicholas I (**Hom. XVIII** in C. Mango, op. cit., p. 312).

16) **Amphil.** 194, PG, CI, 933 A.

17) Harduini, **Collectio**, VI, 232 E.

18) PG, CXX, 800 B.

19) **In Lucam**, PG, CXXIII, 1073 D — 1076 A.

20) **In Johannem**, PG, CXXIV, 309 A.

21) **Ibid.**, col. 313 A.

22) Quoted by M. Jugie, op. cit., IV, p. 328.

23) **Hom. 28**, PG, CLI, 356-360.

24) **Triads**, II, 1, 38, ed. Meyendorff, Lauvain, 1959, p. 304.

25) **Ibid.**, III, 1, 38, ed. cit., p. 630; cf. other references to similar passages of Palamas in our **Introduction a l'etude de Gregoire Palamas**, Paris, 1959, p. 251, note 126.

25 bis) The conceptions of Michael of Anchialus are expressed in the form of a dialogue with the emperor Manuel; the dialogue was published by Ch. Loparev in the **Vizantijskij Vremennik**, 14 (1907), pp. 344-357. On Andronicus Camaterus, see J. Hergenrother, **Photius, patr. von Konstantinopel**, Regensburg, 1867-1869, vol. III, p. 813.

26) The letter is unpublished; it is to be found in the **Paris. gr. 1302** (XIIIth c.), ff. 270ff.; cf. brief excepts in M. Jugie, op. cit., IV, pp. 341-342.

27) Published for the first time by Beveridge, **Synodikon sive Pantectoe canonum**, II, Oxford, 1672. This document is now to be found in the critical

edition of M. Gordillo, **Photius et primatus romanus**, in **Orientalia Christiana Periodica**, VI, 1940, pp. 5-39; the editor attributes the pamphlet to a writer of the early thirteenth century. This was also the opinion of Russian scholars like Kuganov, **K izsledovaniju o patr. Fotii**, in **Khristianskoe Chtenie**, 1895, I, pp. 198, and Th. Rossejkin **Vostochnyi Papism v IX-m veke** in **Bogoslovskij Vestnik**, 1915, II, p. 421. The arguments recently given by F. Dvornik against the authorship of Photius can be considered as decisive (**The Photian Schism**, Cambridge, 1948, pp. 125-127, and **The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium**, pp. 247-253).

28) Ed. A. Heisenberg in **Sitzungsberichte der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philos., philolog. und hist. Klasse**, 1923, 2. Abh. — **Neue Quellen zur Geschichte der lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion**, II. — **Die unionverhandlungen von 30 Aug. 1206**, Munchen, 1923.

29) Published for the first time by archim. Arsenij in **Chtenia v obshchestve liubitelej duhhovnago prosveshcheniia**, 1891 and 1893; republished by A. Heisenberg in the same **Sitzungsberichte**, 1923, 3. Abh., **Neue Quellen**, III. — **Der Bericht der Nikolaos Mesarites über die politischen und kaiserlichen Ereignisse des Jahres 1214**.

30) Ed. A. Pavlov, **Kriticheskie opyty po istorii drevnejshej greko-russkoj polemiki protiv Latinjan**, St. Petersburg, 1878, pp. 158-168.

31) Ed. archim. Arsenij, **Tri stat'i neizvestnago grecheskago pisatelia...**, Moscow, 1892, pp. 84-115.

31 bis) Cf. F. Dvornik, **The Idea of Apostolicity**, pp. 289-294.

32) Ed. Pavlov, p. 164-165.

33) **Paris. gr. 1302, fol. 279 B.**

34) Ed. Arsenij, p. 107-111.

35) Ed. Pavlov, p. 165.

36) *Ibid.*, p. 166.

37) **Paris gr. 1302, ff. 271-272**; quoted also in **M. Jugie**, op. cit., IV, p. 341, note 1.

38) *Ibid.*, fol. 272 V.

39) Ed. Pavlov, p. 166.

40) Ed. Heisenberg, **Neue Quellen** II, p. 22.

41) Ed. Heisenberg, **Neue Quellen** III, p. 34-35.

42) Ed. Heisenberg, **Neue Quellen**, II, p. 24; cf. **Pseudo-Photius**, ed. Gordillo, p. 12.

43) Ed. Heisenberg, **Neue Quellen**, II, p. 22-23; cf. **Pseudo-Photius**, ed. Gordillo, p. 12-13.

43 bis) F. Dvornik, op. cit., p. 295.

44) One of them is published in PG. CLI, 1255-1280. The other two are to be found in several manuscripts (**Paris. gr.** 1278, 1218, 1308, 2751; **Vatic. gr.** 1106, 1717, 2242; **Marc. gr.** 153. etc).

45) PG, CLI, 1260 cD; cf. 1262 C.

46) Ibid., 1262 D-1263 C. The difference stressed here between apostles and bishops was already clearly made by the early Fathers. St. Ireneus of Lyons considers Linus as the first bishop of the church founded in Rome by Peter and Paul (**Contra haereses**, III, 3, 3, ed. Sagnard, Paris 1952, p. 104); the same conception is to be found in Eusebius (**Historia ecclesiastica**, III, 2, ed. Bardy, Paris, 1952, p. 98). The tradition according to which Clement, second or third bishop of Rome, was also ordained by Peter goes back to Tertullian (**De praescriptione haereticorum**, 32, ed. Kroymann, Vienna, 1942, p. 40). It implies that Peter ordained several consecutive bishops of Rome, but was never himself a bishop.

47) **Paris. gr.** 1278, fol. 101.

48) Ibid., fol. 127 v.

49) Ibid., fol. 130.

50) Ibid.

51) PG. CXLIX, 704 D — 705 A.

52) Ibid., 701 B.

53) Ibid., 708 B.

54) Ibid., 724 B.

55) **Dial. contra haereses**, 23, PG. CLV, 120 AC.

56) Ibid., 121 AB.

57) Ibid., 120 D.

58) Ibid., 121 C.

59) **On the Procession of the Holy Spirit**. I, ed. Petit-Jugie, II, p. 62.

60) **Letter to Joachim**, ed. cit. IV, p. 206-207.

61) **On the Procession**, I, ed. cit., p. 63.

62) PG. CXLIX, 701 CD.



The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology

by Alexander Schmemann

1.

By **primacy** we mean here an ecclesiastical power, superior to that of a Bishop whose jurisdiction is limited to his diocese. In Church history and canonical tradition we find the following forms of primacy:

a) **regional primacy** — within an ecclesiastical province or metropolitan district, i. e. in a group of dioceses (as defined, for example, in Apostolic Canon 33).

b) primacy within the so-called **autocephalous churches**: the power of a Patriarch or Archbishop (e. g. the Patriarch of Moscow), and

c) **universal primacy**: that of Rome or Constantinople.¹⁾

But if facts are known, their ecclesiological interpretation is virtually absent from Orthodox theology. We badly need a clarification of the nature and functions of all these primacies and, first of all, of the very concept of primacy. For both in theory and in practice there is a great deal of confusion concerning the definition of the “supreme power” in the church, of its scope and the modes of its expression. Of the three types of primacy mentioned above, only the second — the primacy within the autocephalous church, is defined more or less precisely in each particular “autocephaly.” But even here the ecclesiological dimension is obviously lacking and the great variety of existing patterns — from the almost absolute “monarchy” of the Russian Patriarch to the more or less nominal primacy of the Archbishop of Athens — reveals the absence of a common understanding of primacy, or of a consistent canonical theory of it. For two hundred years Russian bishops and canonists denounced the synodal government instituted by Peter the Great as non-canonical, yet it was recognized as canonical by the other Eastern churches.²⁾ Why is the actual patriarchal monarchy in Russia (the bishops even call the Patriarch their “father”) more canonical than the collective government or the Holy Synod?

What are, in other terms, the criteria of canonicity? Obviously no existing administrative system can be simply equated with canonical tradition. In the empirical life of the Church one administrative system is replaced by another, and each of them is the result of a "canonical adjustment," i. e., the application of the canonical tradition to a particular situation. Yet, only a clear understanding of the canonical tradition itself with all of its theological and ecclesiological implications can supply us with solid criteria for a canonical evaluation of any of such "adjustments" and for measuring their canonicity.³

As to the **regional** and **universal** types of primacy, there does not exist even a *de facto* concensus of Orthodox opinion. Regional primacy, although it is clearly sanctioned by our canonical tradition,⁴ has practically disappeared from the structure and the life of the Orthodox Churches in the triumph of centralized autocephalies. And the idea of universal primacy is either rejected as alien to the very spirit of Orthodoxy or formulated in terms so vague and ambiguous that, instead of solving, they only obscure the whole problem of primacy.⁵

And yet the solution of this problem is certainly on the agenda for our time. It would not be difficult to prove that the canonical and jurisdictional troubles and divisions, of which we have had too many in the last decades, have their roots in some way or other in this question of primacy, or, to be more exact, in the absence of a clearly defined doctrine of the nature and functions of primacy. And the same unsolved problem constitutes a major handicap for the unity and, therefore, the progress of Orthodoxy in countries like America where, paradoxically enough, the loyalty to a certain concept of "canonicity" leads to the most uncanonical situation that can be imagined: the coexistence on the same territory of a number of parallel "jurisdictions" and dioceses...⁶ Finally, there can be little doubt that Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church, is today at the very center of our relations with the non-Orthodox. Among Roman Catholic theologians, there is a growing interest, and not only a "polemical" one, in Orthodox views on Primacy;⁷ as to the Protestants, it is of vital importance that they understand our concept of the Church's universality. There are thus reasons for a genuinely theological reconsideration of the whole question. And even if no final answer can be given immediately, it will not be reached without a sustained theological effort.

We have defined **primacy** as a form of power. This definition, however, must be qualified at once. For there is a preliminary question: does the Orthodox Church possess a power superior to that of a bishop, i. e., a power **over** the Bishop, and hence, the Church of which he is the head? This question is essential for the whole problem of primacy.⁸ But the answers given it by ecclesiology on the one hand and the various ecclesiastical administrative systems on the other hand are contradictory. Theologically and ecclesiologically the answer should be "no": there can be no power **over** the bishop and his Church (i. e. dioceses) for, "if power belongs to the Church as one its constituent elements, it must correspond to the nature of the Church and not be heterogeneous to it."⁹ The ministry of power and government, as all other ministries within the Church, is a **charism**, a gift of grace. It is bestowed through the sacrament of order, for only sacramentally received power is possible in the Church whose very nature is grace and whose very **institution** is based on grace. And the Church has only three charismatic orders with no gift of power superior to that of a bishop. No sacramental order of primacy, no charism of primacy exists, therefore, in the Orthodox Church; if it existed, it would have a nature different from grace and, consequently, its source would not be the Church.

But in the present canonical structure of the Church such **supreme power** not only exists, but is commonly conceived as the foundation of the Church, and the basis of its canonical system.¹⁰ Theoretically, it is true, a personal power of one bishop over another bishop is rejected; the "supreme power" is exercised usually by the Primate together with a governing body: synod, council, etc... For us, however, the important fact is that such supreme ecclesiastical government is always characterized as power over bishops, who are therefore subordinated to it. "Supreme power" is thus introduced into the very structure of the Church as its essential element. The divorce between canonical tradition and the canonical facts is nowhere more obvious than in this universal triumph of the notion of supreme power. Having rejected and still rejecting it in its Roman form, i. e., as universal power, the Orthodox conscience has easily accepted it in the so-called "autocephalies."

In this situation the question we have formulated above cannot be answered simply by references to historical precedent or canonical texts, isolated from their context, as it is too often done in

contemporary canonical controversies. We must go deeper into the very sources of Orthodox doctrine of the Church, to the essential laws of her organization and life.

3.

Orthodox tradition is unanimous in its affirmation of the Church as organic unity. This organism is the Body of Christ and the definition is not merely symbolical but expresses the very nature of the Church.¹¹ It means that the visible organizational structure of the Church is the manifestation and actualization of the Body of Christ, or, in other terms, that this structure is rooted in the Church as the Body of Christ. But one must stress immediately that if the doctrine of the Church-Body of Christ is both scriptural and traditional, it has never really been elaborated and interpreted theologically. For reasons which cannot be discussed here (we shall mention some of them later) this doctrine disappeared rather early from canonical (i. e. ecclesiological) thinking both in the West and East, and its neglect by canonists constitutes, no doubt, a tragedy the results of which mark all domains of ecclesiastical life and thought. In the early Church the canonical tradition was an integral part of ecclesiology — of the living experience of the Church. But little by little it became an autonomous sphere in which the visible ecclesiastical structures, the functions of power and authority, and the relations between Churches, ceased to be explained in terms of the Church-Body of Christ. Loosing its ties with ecclesiology, the canonical tradition became "canon law." But in Canon Law there was no room for the notion of the Body of Christ because this notion has nothing to do with "law." The life of the Church came to be expressed in juridical terms, and the canons which originally were (and essentially still are) an ecclesiological testimony were transformed into, and used as juridical norms.¹² The "mystery of the Church" was neither denied nor forgotten. It simply ceased to be understood as the only law of the whole life of the Church.¹³

Today, however, an ecclesiological revival is taking place. And it is moved primarily by the desire to express the Church — her life, her structures, her visible unity — in adequate theological terms, and first of all in terms of the Body of Christ. It is within this revival and in connection with this "rediscovery" of the traditional concept of the Body that new attempts are made to clarify

the basic ecclesiological notions of **organism** and **organic unity**. And these, in turn, shape and condition the whole understanding of **primacy**.

The Church is an **organism**. The Church is **organic unity**. In a series of articles the contemporary Russian theologian and canonist Fr. N. Afanassieff shows that there existed (and still exist) two ecclesiological “elaborations” or interpretations of this organic unity: the **universal** and the **eucharistic**.¹⁴ This distinction, we shall see, is of capital importance for the understanding of the Orthodox idea of primacy.¹⁵

The universal ecclesiology finds its fullest expression in Roman Catholic theology, crowned by the Vatican dogma of 1870. Here the only adequate expression of the Church as organism is the universal structure of the Church, its universal unity. The Church is the **sum** of all local churches, which all together **constitute** the Body of Christ. The Church is thus conceived in terms of **whole** and **parts**. Each community, each local church is but a part, a member of this universal organism; and it participates in the Church only through its belonging to the “whole.” In the words of one of its best exponents, Roman theology seeks a definition of the Church in which “parts would receive within the whole, conceived really as a whole, the status of genuine parts.”¹⁶

We do not need to go here into all details of this ecclesiology. The important point here is for us to see that in the light of this doctrine the need for and the reality of a universal head, i. e. the Bishop of Rome, can no longer be termed an exaggeration. It becomes not only acceptable but necessary. If the Church is an universal organism, she must have at her head a universal bishop as the focus of her unity and the organ of supreme power. The idea, popular in Orthodox apologetics, that the Church can have no visible head, because Christ is her **invisible** head, is theological nonsense.¹⁷ If applied consistently, it should also eliminate the necessity for the **visible** head of each local church, i. e. the bishop. Yet it is the basic assumption of a “catholic” ecclesiology that the visible structure of the Church manifests and communicates its invisible nature. The invisible Christ is made present through and in the visible unity of the Bishop and the People: the Head and the Body.¹⁸ To oppose the **visible** structure to the **invisible** Christ leads inescapably to the Protestant divorce between a visible and human Church which is contingent, relative, and changing, and an invisible Church

in heaven. We must simply admit that if the categories of organism and organic unity are to be applied primarily to the Church universal as the sum of all its component parts (i. e. local churches), then the one, supreme, and universal power as well as its bearer become a self-evident necessity because this unique visible organism must have a unique visible head. Thus the efforts of Roman Catholic theologians to justify Roman primacy not by mere historical contingencies but by divine institution appear as logical. Within universal ecclesiology primacy is of necessity **power**, and, by the same necessity, a Divinely instituted power; we have all this in a consistent form in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church.

4.

Is this ecclesiology acceptable from the Orthodox point of view? The question may seem naive. The Orthodox Church has rejected as heretical the Roman claims and thus has implicitly condemned the ecclesiology which supports them. This answer, however, while correct in theory, is not the one which we find in facts, in the reality of life. We must remember that the rejection of Roman claims at the time of the Western Schism was due to an Orthodox "instinct" more than to a positive ecclesiological doctrine. It was helped by violent anti-Roman feelings among the Easterners, and by the whole alienation and estrangement of the West from the East. It is well-known today what atmosphere of hatred, mutual suspicion, and bitterness accompanied the doctrinal controversies, adding an emotional dimension,¹⁹ to the dogmatical rupture. The rejection of Roman errors did not result in a positive elaboration of the Orthodox doctrine as was the case after the condemnation of Arianism, Nestorianism, etc. Our ecclesiology is still lacking an "oros," similar to the Nicene Creed in Triadology or the Chalcedon definition in Christology. But at the time of the Schism, the Church conscience both in the West and in the East was deeply affected by ideas alien to Orthodox ecclesiology. We shall deal with some of them later. Here we must stress that all of them were a denial *de facto* of the living sources of the eucharistic **ecclesiology** which constitutes, in our opinion the basis of the true canonical tradition. I say **de facto** because the Orthodox Church, different in this respect from Rome, has never transformed this denial into a doctrine, into an ecclesiological system. Various types of "canon law" have neither poisoned the prime sources of Church life, nor abolished or replaced

the canonical tradition. Thus there is the possibility of a return to them.

What then, from the point of view which interests us in this essay, is the essence of this Orthodox ecclesiology? It is, above all, that it applies the categories of **organism** and **organic unity** to "the Church of God abiding..." in every place: to the local church, to the community led by a bishop and having, in communion with him, the **fulness** of the Church. Fr. Afanassieff terms it "eucharistic ecclesiology." And, indeed, it is rooted in the Eucharist as the Sacrament of the Church, an Act, which ever actualizes the Church as the **Body of Christ**.²⁰ A similar view is expressed by Fr. George Florovsky. "The Sacraments," he writes, "constitute the Church. Only in them the Christian community transcends its human dimensions and becomes the Church."²¹ Through the Eucharist we have the whole Christ and not a "part" of Him; and therefore the Church which is "actualized" in the Eucharist is not a "part" or "member" of a whole, but the Church of God in her wholeness. For it is precisely the function of the Eucharist to manifest the whole Church, her "catholicity." Where there is the Eucharist, there is the Church; and conversely, only where the whole Church is, (i. e., the people of God united in the Bishop, the Head, the Shepherd), there is the Eucharist. Such is the primitive ecclesiology, expressed in the tradition of the early Church and still recognizable in our canons and in the liturgical "rubrics," which to so many seem obscure and non-essential.²² There is no room here for the categories of the "parts" and of the "whole," because it is the very essence of the sacramental-hierachal structure that in it a "part" not only "agrees" with but is identical to the whole, reveals it adequately in itself, and in one word is the whole. The local Church as a sacramental organism, as the Gift of God in Christ, is not part or member of a wider universal organism. She is the Church. Objectively, as the Body of Christ, the Church is always identical to herself in space and time. In time, because she is always the people of God gathered to proclaim the death of the Lord and to confess His resurrection. — In space, because in each local Church the fulness of gifts is given, the whole Truth is announced, the whole Christ is present, who is "yesterday and today and forever the same." In her sacramental and hierachal order the Church reveals and conveys to men the fulness of Christ into which they must grow. (cf. Eph. 4:13).

The essential corollary of this “eucharistic” ecclesiology is that it excludes the idea of a **supreme power**, understood as power over the local Church and her Bishop. The ministry of power, as all ministries and charisms, has its source in and is performed within the organic unity of the Church. It is rooted in the **sacraments** whose aim is to fulfill the Church as the Body of Christ. This ministry of power belongs to the Bishop and there is no ministry of any higher power. A **supreme power** would mean power over the Church, over the Body of Christ, over Christ Himself. The Bishop is vested with power, yet the root of this power is in the Church, in the Eucharistic gathering, at which he presides as Priest, Pastor and Teacher. “Power” in the Church can be defined and understood only within the indivisible unity of the Church, the Eucharist, and the Bishop. It cannot have a source different from that of the Church herself: the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the “new eon,” of the life in the Spirit. And for the early Church all this was a living reality such that it would not be difficult to show that this reality shaped the foundations of the canonical tradition.²³ When, for example, our present and highly “juridical” canon law affirms that all Bishops are **equal in grace**, does this not mean what has been affirmed above? For what is the grace of episcopate if not the “charism” of power? And since the Church knows of no other charism of power, there can exist no power higher than that of the Bishop.²⁴

5. Does all this mean that Orthodox ecclesiology simply rejects the very notion of **primacy**? No. But it rejects the fatal error of universal ecclesiology which identifies primacy with power, transforming the latter from a ministry in the Church into power over the Church. To explain the Orthodox conception of primacy we must now consider the approach of eucharistic ecclesiology towards the Church universal. It must be stated emphatically that this type of ecclesiology does not transform the local Church into a self sufficient monad, without any “organic” link with other similar monads. There is no “congregationalism” here.²⁵ The organic unity of the Church universal is not less real than the organic unity of the local Church. But if universal ecclesiology interprets it in terms of “parts” and “whole,” for eucharistic ecclesiology the adequate term is that of **identity**: “the Church of God abiding in...” The Church of God is the one and indivisible Body of Christ, wholly and indivisibly present in each Church, i. e. in the visible unity of the people of God, the Bishop and the Eucharist. And if universal unity is indeed

unity of the Church and not merely **unity of Churches**, its essence is not that all churches together constitute one vast, unique organism, but that each Church — in the identity of order, faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit — is the **same** Church, the same Body of Christ, indivisibly present wherever is the “ecclesia.” It is thus the same organic unity of the church herself, the “Churches” being not complementary to each other, as parts or members, but each one and all of them together being nothing else, but the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

It is this ontological identity of all Churches with the Church of God that establish the connecting link between Churches, making them the Church universal. For the fulness (pleroma) of each local Church not only does not contradict her **need** for other Churches, and, indeed, her **dependance** on them, but implies them as **her own conditio sine qua non**. On the one hand the fulness of each local Church is the same that is given to every other Church; it is a fulness possessed in common as the gift of God. And on the other hand, she has it **only** in agreement with all other churches, and only in as much as she does not separate herself from this agreement, does not make the one and indivisible gift her own, “private” gift...

“A new bishop shall be installed by all bishops of the province...”

In this Canon 4 of the Council of Nicea (which simply sanctions an already existing practice — (cf. Hippolytus’ Apostolic Tradition) we find the first and the most comprehensive form of the **inter-dependance** of several churches. The local Church receives the condition and the “note” of her fulness — the episcopate — through the Bishops of other Churches. What is the meaning of this dependance? The universal — “whole-and-parts” — ecclesiology uses this canon as its main justification and proof: the plurality of the consecrators signifies the “whole” to which the local church — the “part” — is therefore subordinated.²⁶ Such interpretation could appear only at a time when the real link between the Bishop and his Church was forgotten and the charism of episcopacy had come to be thought of as a personal gift which any “two or three” bishops could bestow on anyone, and when “valid consecration” became the only content of the notion of apostolic succession. The meaning of this canon appears quite different if we look into the early practice of the Church as described, for example, in the “Apostolic Tradition” of Hippolytus. The consecration of a bishop is followed by the Eucharist which is offered by the newly consecrated

bishop and not by any of the consecrators.²⁷ This seemingly minor "liturgical" detail expresses in fact an important norm of the primitive ecclesiology. From the moment he is elected and consecrated, the Bishop is the president of the Eucharistic assembly, i. e. the head of the Church, and his consecration finds its fulfillment when for the first time he offers to God the Eucharist of the Church. Thus the consecration of a Bishop is first of all the **testimony** that this man, elected by his own Church, is elected and appointed by God, and that through his election and consecration his Church is identical with the Church of God which abides in all Churches..²⁸ It is not the transfer of a gift by those who possess it, but the manifestation of the fact that the **same** gift, which they have received in the Church from God, has now been given to this Bishop in this Church. Episcopate is not a "collective gift" which any "two or three" Bishops can convey to another man, but a ministry in the Church, a gift given to the Church; therefore the "cheirotonia" of a Bishop bears testimony that the Church **has** received it. The unbroken Episcopal succession, which was the decisive argument in the polemics against gnosticism, was understood primarily as the succession of bishops within every Church and not in terms of "consecrators."²⁹ Today, however, the emphasis in the doctrine of Apostolic succession has shifted to the question of consecrators. But such was not the meaning given this doctrine by St. Irenaeus;³⁰ for in spite of the fact that no bishop could be consecrated by his predecessor in the same chair, it is precisely this succession in the chair which is all important to St. Irenaeus and is to him the proof of the "identity" of the Church in time and space with the Church of God, with the fulness of Christ's gift — for "the Church is in the Bishop and the Bishop is in the Church." The consecration of a bishop by other bishops is thus the acknowledgement of the will of God as being fulfilled in this particular Church. This fulfillment includes, to be sure, the bestowing of the charism of the Holy Spirit upon the candidate, and from this point of view the consecrators are **the** ministers of the sacrament of Order. But this they are because of their function and ministry in the Church and not in virtue of a power over grace, inherent to their "rank." Sacramental theology has dealt almost exclusively with the **right** of the bishops to consecrate other bishops but has badly neglected the ecclesiological **content** and meaning of this right, which come precisely from the bishop's function as **witness** of God's will in the Church, his "charism" being

to keep the Church in the will of God and guide her towards its fulfillment. The Church whose bishop has died has also lost the power to express this testimony. The testimony, therefore, must of necessity come from other Churches and through their ministers who have the charism of proclaiming the will of God. In other terms, this aspect of **testimony** (the absence of which may lead eventually to an almost magical understanding of the sacrament of order) is essential to the consecration; while the gift of the Spirit comes not from the bishops, yet their presence, unity, and testimony are the signs of its having been given to this particular Church by God Himself; they are indeed the "form" of the sacrament.³¹

The dependance of each Church on other Churches is thus a dependance not of submission but of testimony: each Church testifying about all others and all together testifying about each that they are **one** in faith and life and that separately and all together they are the Church of God — the indivisible gift of the new life in Christ. Each Church has fulness in herself, acknowledged and fulfilled in the unity of the Bishop and the people; and it is the identity of this fulness with the fulness of the Church of God (and, therefore, with the "pleroma" of every other Church) that is both expressed and maintained in the consecration of a new Bishop by other Bishops. Thus the organic unity of the Church as Body of Christ does not divide her into "parts" nor make the life of any local Church "partial"; it prevents the isolation of the local Church into a self-sufficient organism with no need for other Churches. And we should add that the conscience of the universal unity of the Church, of living koinonia and mutual responsibility and the joy of belonging to the one household of God, has never been stronger than during the short triumph of precisely this type of ecclesiology.³²

6. The sacrament of episcopal consecration reveals the first and the essential form of **primacy**, or rather the basis of primacy: the **synod of bishops**. In Orthodoxy the synod is usually given an exceptional importance. The Church is often described as the Church of the Councils and her government as "conciliary" ("sobornyi" in Russian). But very little has been done to define the nature and function of synods in theological terms. Canonically the synod is interpreted as the "supreme authority" in the Church. Such, we have seen, is the inescapable logic of canon law once it has ceased to be governed internally by the doctrine of the Church

as Body of Christ. In fact, to the Roman doctrine of a **personal** supreme power one opposed, on the Orthodox side, the theory of a collective supreme power; and in contemporary controversies the only question debated is that of the **limits** of such a "college" — whether it should consist of bishops only or include "representatives" from clergy and laity. This theory acquired a new vitality after it was combined — in a rather inconsistent way — with the Slavophile teaching about the "sobornost," and this combination made it possible to accuse Roman Catholicism with a clear conscience for being overjuridical in its ecclesiology.

However, the idea of Synod as "the visible supreme constitutive and governing organ of Church power"³³ does not correspond either to the Slavophile doctrine of "Sobornost"³⁴ or to the original function of the synod in the Church. The Synod is not "power" in the juridical sense of this word, for there can exist no power over the Church Body of Christ. The Synod is, rather, a **witness** to the identity of all Churches as the Church of God in faith, life and "agape." If in his own Church the Bishop is priest, teacher and pastor, the divinely appointed witness and keeper of the catholic faith, it is through the agreement of all Bishops, as revealed in the Synod, that all Churches both manifest and maintain the ontological unity of Tradition, "for languages differ in the world, but the force of Tradition is the same" (St. Irenaeus). The Synod of Bishops is not an organ of power over the Church, nor is it "greater" or "fuller" than the fulness of any local Church, but in and through it all Churches acknowledge and realize their ontological unity as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Ecclesiologically and dogmatically the Synod is **necessary** for the consecration of a bishop. The sacrament of order is its ecclesiological foundation³⁵ because, as we have seen, the synod is the essential condition of the fulness of each local Church, of her "pleroma" as Body of Christ. But it also has another equally important function. The Church which by her very nature belongs to the new eon, to the Kingdom of the age to come, yet abides in history, in time, in "this world." She is in **statu patriae**, but also in **statu viae**. She is Fulness, but she is also Mission: the Divine love, the Divine will of salvation addressed to the world. And it is by being Mission, by loving those for whom Christ died, that the Church realizes herself as the Fulness. A Church that would isolate herself from the world and live by her eschatological fulness, that would cease to

“evangelize,” to bear witness to Christ in the world, would simply cease to be the Church — because the fulness by which she lives is precisely the agape of God as revealed and communicated in Christ. “Mission” cannot, therefore, be a static relationship with the world. It means fight with, and for, the world; it means a constant effort to understand and to challenge, to question and to answer. And this means finally that within the Church herself there must constantly arise doubts and problems and the need for a fresh renewal of the living testimony. The “world” both outside and inside the Church, tempts and challenges her with all its powers of destruction and doubt, idolatry and sin. This challenge calls for a common effort of all churches, for a faithful and living “koinonia” and agreement. It is this mission of the Church in the world, her “working” in time and history, that give the Synod its second function: to be the **common voice**, the common testimony of several (or all) Churches in their ontological unity. Thus the Apostolic synod meets not as a regular and necessary “organ” of the Church, but in connection with a problem arising out of the missionary situation in the Church. There is no evidence for any synod of this type till the end of the second century when Montanism provoked a common resistance of the ecclesiastical body.³⁶ In the third century the African synod appears as a regular institution, but again its regularity is not that of an organ of power, but that of orderly consultations on common problems. Finally the council of Nicea and all subsequent Ecumenical Councils always convened to confront a problem which was vital to all Churches and which required their common testimony. It is the **truth** of its decision and not any “constitutional right or guarantee” that makes it the highest authority in the Church.

7). It is in the Synod that **primacy** finds its first and most general expression. The Synod, since its basic purpose is the consecration of a bishop, is primarily a **regional** Synod. i. e. the council of a definite geographical area. The boundaries of such an area can be fixed in various ways: they can be geographical or coincide with a political administrative unit or be the limits of Christian expansion from an ecclesiastical center: in Church history there is ample evidence for all of these systems. But ecclesiastically the essential feature of a **district** is the participation of all its bishops in the consecration of a new bishop (cf. Canon 4 of Nicaea). And its second constitutive element is the existence among these bishops of a clearly

defined primacy of the **first bishop**. This primacy is defined in the famous Apostolic Canon 34: "The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent; ...but neither let him (who is the first) do anything without the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity..."

Here the essence of the regional primacy is stated quite clearly: it is not "power" or "jurisdiction" (for the primate can do nothing without the assent of all), but the expression of the unity and unanimity of all bishops and, consequently, of all Churches of the area.

There is no need to go into all the details of the rather complicated history of the **metropolitan district** in the ancient Church.³⁷ There can be little doubt that it was the most common, the most natural and basic form of relationship between local Churches, the basic link of their unity, rooted in the sacrament of order. There can also be little doubt that for a long time the **local primacy** was universally understood and accepted as the basic expression of the very function of primacy. To use modern terminology each "metropolitan district" was "autocephalous" (this is confirmed by Balsamon), since the main principle of "autocephaly" is precisely the right to elect and consecrate new bishops.

But local primacy is not the only form of primacy to be found in our canonical tradition. Almost from the very beginning there existed also wider groupings of Churches with a corresponding "center of agreement" or primacy within them. One can argue which form of primacy appeared first. For, as it is well known, Christianity was settled first in the major cities of the Roman Empire and from there spread into the suburban areas. And since a metropolitan district implies the existence of a number of Churches in a given area, it is only natural to think that at first the function of primacy belonged exclusively to the Churches of the great metropolitan centers. Even after the growth in number of local churches and the consequent shaping of metropolitan districts, the original "centers" or "mother-churches" did not lose their special status, their particular primacy. One could call this later stage "second degree primacy." In the second and third centuries such was the position of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Lyons, Carthage etc. What then were the nature and the functions of this form of primacy?

The well known canon 6 of Nicaea applies to it the term **power** (*exousia*). But Bishop N. Milash in his commentary of this canon shows quite clearly that “power” here must be understood as “priority” or “privilege.”³⁸ The canon defines the relationship between the Bishop of Alexandria and the four metropolitans of the Diocese of Egypt. In Egypt the metropolitan system appeared later than elsewhere and the Bishop of Alexandria, who was from the beginning the “head” of the whole Egyptian Church (i. e. the Primate of all bishop), had, therefore, the privilege of primacy everywhere (i. e. the right to convene the Synods for the consecration of new bishops). The Council of Nicaea, which sanctioned the metropolitan system, had to establish for Egypt a kind of synthesis between the universal norm and the local particularities. On the one hand, it emphasized that no bishop could be consecrated without the assent of the metropolitan (thereby affirming the “local primacy”) but, on the other hand, it left with the Bishop of Alexandria the ultimate approval of all elections. But, as a general rule, this latter form of primacy was defined in Nicaea as **priority**, and history shows clearly enough the nature of that priority: one can describe it as **primacy of authority**. Let us stress that we have here not so much the primacy of a bishop (as in the case of the metropolitan district) but the primacy of a particular church, her special spiritual and doctrinal authority among other Churches. The great majority of local Christian communities was born from the missionary activity of some important urban Church. From the latter they received the rule of faith, the rule of prayer and the “apostolic succession.” Many of these great Churches had, in addition, Apostles or their first disciples for founders. Furthermore they were usually better equipped theologically and intellectually. It is natural, then, that in difficult or controversial cases, these Churches took upon themselves the initiative of appeasement or, in other terms, of reaching and expressing the “agreement” of all churches. The local Churches looked to them for guidance and counsel and recognized in their voice a special authority. We have early examples of such authority in the activity of St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Irinaeus of Lyons, and later, in the councils of Antioch and Carthage... Yet primacy of authority here cannot be defined in juridical norms, because it has nothing to do with “*jus*” as such; yet it was quite real in the life of the early Church and the seeds of the future patriarchates are to be found in it. Once again we must stress that its essence and purpose is not “power,”

but the manifestation of the existent unity of the Churches in faith and life.

Finally we come to the highest and ultimate form of primacy: **the universal primacy.** An age-long anti-Roman prejudice has led some Orthodox canonists simply to deny the existence of such primacy in the past or the need for it in the present. But an objective study of the canonical tradition cannot fail to establish beyond any doubt that, along with local "centers of agreement" or primacies, the Church had also known an universal primacy. The ecclesiological error of Rome lies not in the affirmation of her universal primacy. Rather, the error lies in the identification of this primacy with "supreme power" which transforms Rome into the "principium radix et origo"³⁹ of the unity of the Church and of the Church herself. This ecclesiological distortion, however, must not force us into a simple rejection of universal primacy. On the contrary it ought to encourage its genuinely Orthodox interpretation.

It is impossible to deny that even before the appearance of local primacies the Church from the first days of the existence possessed an ecumenical center of her unity and agreement. In the Apostolic and the Judaeo-Christian period it was the Church of Jerusalem, and later the Church of Rome — "presiding in agape" according to St. Ignatius of Antioch. This formula and the definition of the universal primacy contained in it have been aptly analyzed by Fr. Afanassieff and we need not repeat here his argument.⁴⁰ Neither can we quote here all the testimonies of the Fathers and Councils unanimously acknowledging Rome as the senior Church and the center of ecumenical agreement.⁴¹ It is only for the sake of biased polemics that one can ignore these testimonies, their consensus and significance. It has happened, however, that if Roman historians and theologians have always interpreted this evidence in juridical terms, thus falsifying its real meaning, their Orthodox opponents have systematically belittled the evidence itself. Orthodox theology is still awaiting a truly Orthodox evaluation of universal primacy in the first millennium of Church history — an evaluation free from polemical or apologetic exaggerations. Such study will certainly reveal that the essence and purpose of this primacy is to express and preserve the unity of the Church in faith and life; to express and preserve the unanimity of all Churches; to keep them from isolating themselves into ecclesiastical provincialism, loosing the Catholic ties, separating themselves from the unity of life. It

means ultimately to assume the care, the **sollicitudo**⁴² of the Churches so that each one of them can abide in that fulness which is always the **whole** catholic tradition and not any “part” of it.

From this brief analysis of the concept of primacy we can draw the following general conclusion: primacy in the Church is not “supreme power,” this notion being incompatible with the nature of the Church as Body of Christ. But neither is primacy a mere “chairmanship” if one understands this term in its modern, parliamentary and democratic connotations. It has its roots, as all other functions, in the Church — Body of Christ. In each Church there fully abides and is always “actualized” the Church of God; yet all together the Churches are still the same one and indivisible Church of God, the Body of Christ. The Church of God is manifested in the plurality of the Churches; but because ontologically they are the **same** Church, this ontological identity is expressed in a visible, living, and constantly renewed link: the unity of faith, the unity of action and mission, the common care for everything that constitutes the task of Church in “*statu viae*.” A local Church cannot isolate herself, become a center in herself, live “by herself” and by her own local and private interests, because the **fulness** which constitutes her very being is precisely the fulness of the catholic faith and catholic mission, the fulness of Christ who fills all things in all. The Church cannot actualize this fulness, make it her own, and, therefore, be the Church, without *ipso facto* living in all and by all; and this means living in the universal conscience of the Church “scattered in the whole world and yet abiding as if it were in one home.” A local Church cut from this universal “*koinonia*” is indeed a **contradictio in adjecto**, for this *koinonia* is the very essence of the Church. And it, has, therefore, its **form** and **expression**: primacy. Primacy is the necessary expression of the unity in faith and life of all local Churches, of their living and efficient *koinonia*.

Now we can return to our first definition of primacy. Primacy is power, but as power it is not different from the power of a Bishop in each church. It is not a **higher power** but indeed the same power only expressed, manifested, actualized by one. The primate **can** speak for all because the Church is one and because the power he exercises is the power of each bishop and of all bishops. And he **must** speak for all because this very unity and agreement require, in order to be efficient, a special organ of expression, a mouth, a voice... Primacy is thus a necessity because therein is the expression

and manifestation of the unity of Churches as being the unity of the Church. And it is important to remember that the Primate, as we know him from our canonical tradition, is always the Bishop of a local Church and not a "bishop at large," and that primacy belongs to him precisely because of his status in his own Church.⁴³ It is not a personal charism, but rather a function of the whole Church, carried and fulfilled by its Bishop. The early tradition clearly indicates the primacy of the Church of Rome, yet we know next to nothing about the first Bishops of Rome who, evidently, served as ministers of this primacy. The idea of primacy thus excludes the idea of jurisdictional power but implies that of an "order" of Churches which does not subordinate one Church to another, but which makes it possible for all Churches to live together this life of all in each and of each in all thusby fulfilling the mystery of the Body of Christ, the fulness "filling all in all."

8. This concept of primacy, as has been said already, is rooted in the "eucharistic ecclesiology" which we believe to be the source of Orthodox canonical and liturgical tradition. As result of its distortion or, at least, "metamorphosis" there appeared another type of ecclesiology which we have termed "universal." It leads necessarily to the understanding and practice of primacy as "supreme power" and therefore, to an **universal bishop** as source and foundation of jurisdiction in the whole ecclesiastical structure. The Orthodox Church has condemned this distortion in its pure and explicit Roman Catholic form. This does not mean, however, that our church life is free from its poison. The universal ecclesiology is a permanent temptation because in the last analysis it is a **natural** one, being the product of "naturalization" of Christianity, its adaptation to the life "after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ". Only the historical sources of this temptation in the East are different from those in the West. And inasmuch as all the controversies within Orthodoxy are obviously centered on this basic question of the nature of the Church, we must conclude this article with a short analysis of our own deficiencies.

At a relatively recent date there arose among the Orthodox the opinion that the Church is based in her life on the **principle of autocephaly**, the term "autocephalous" here being applied exclusively to the Eastern Patriarchates or the great national churches. According to this opinion, the principle of autocephaly is not only one of the historical "expressions" by the Church of her universal

structure, but precisely the ecclesiological foundation of the Church and her life. In other words, the unique universal organism of Roman ecclesiology is opposed here to "autocephalous" organisms, each one constituted by several "dioceses" under one center or "supreme power." All these "autocephalies" are absolutely equal among themselves and this equality excludes any universal center or primacy.⁴⁴

The appearance of this theory and its almost unanimous acceptance by contemporary Orthodox canonists is very significant. In the first place, the principle of autocephaly has indeed been for the last few centuries the unique principle of organization in Orthodoxy and, therefore, its "acting" canonical rule. The reason is clear: the "autocephaly" with this particular meaning is fully adequate to the specifically Eastern form of Christian "naturalization" or reduction of the Church to the "natural world." This explains in turn why of all possible forms it was precisely "autocephaly" which became for centuries the "acting canon law" in the Eastern Church and today is accepted by so many as an eternal and unchangeable principle of her canonical tradition.

All the deficiencies in the ecclesiology conscience in the East can be ascribed to two major sources: the close "identification" of the Church with the state (Byzantine "symphony" and its varieties) and religious nationalism. Both explain the unchallenged triumph of the theory of "Autocephaly."

The identification of the Church with the state (cf. the confused and often tragic history of Byzantine theocracy) deeply changed the very notion of power in the Church. It was shaped more and more after the "juridical" pattern of the State, and its understanding as a charismatic ministry within the Body of Christ was consequently weakened. More precisely there occurred a rupture between the sacramental and the jurisdictional power. A bishop, to receive his power was, of course, still to be consecrated. Yet in fact the source of his "jurisdictional power" rested now with a "supreme power" before which he was to become "responsible." The bishop's "report" to the Synod offers the best example of this change as it indicates first the quick transformation of the function of Synod in Byzantium, and second the equally rapid growth of a real "mystique" of the Supreme Power in the person of the Patriarch.

We know that in the early Church the synod was by its very

nature a gathering of bishops (i. e. a more or less regular convention and not a permanent institution). There were regular or extraordinary synods, but in all of them the essential condition of their very "function" was the living identity of each bishop and his Church — for it was only as "head" of his Church, its "proistamenos" in the deepest sense of this word, that he took part in the synod which thus became the expression of the unity and unanimity of the Churches as the Churches of God. Beginning with the fourth century, although not everywhere at the same time, this idea of the synod was progressively replaced by another one: as the supreme and central power over the Churches. The best example here is the famous "synodos endemousa" in Constantinople which became the pattern for the future "synod." Brought into existence at first as a synod "ad hoc" — an occasional meeting of bishops who happened to be in Constantinople — this synod became little by little a permanent organ of power assisting the Patriarch⁴⁵ with the result that the condition for participation in it was reversed a bishop left his church in order to become a member of this governing body. The bishops became, so to speak, "power in themselves" and their Synod became the supreme or central power. One step more, and the bishops from the jurisdictional point of view have become representatives or delegates of this high power even in their own Churches. This is, of course, only a scheme, but it would not be difficult to substantiate it with facts.⁴⁶ The road from the "synodos endemousa" to the "Governing Synod" of the Russian Church is a straight one, complicated, it is true, by influences of the Western and Protestant "synodal" law... Yet the source of both is in the State, in its notion of "supreme power" as source of any "local power."

Not less characteristic is the development of what may be termed "patriarchal mystique" which finds its first expression in the development of the power of the Patriarch of Constantinople. In its essence this mystique is radically different from that of Papism. The latter has its roots in the experience of the Church as an universal organism, called to dominate the world; the former in the parallelism of the Church and Empire which required an ecclesiastical "counterpart" of the Basileus. Although one must stress again and again, that the origin of the Byzantine Patriarch's unique power is not "lust of power" but the "byzantine analogy" between the two supreme powers,⁴⁷ yet here also it is the State and not the Church that shapes this new idea of power.

The metamorphosis of the very concept of "power," its disconnection, even if a partial one, from the ecclesiology of the Body of Christ and, as the natural result, the emergence of a "supreme power" — all this constitutes the first and yet most tragic crisis in the history of Orthodox ecclesiology. The time has come ie seems to us to admit openly that the Byzantine period of our history, which in many respects is still for us the golden age of Orthodoxy, saw, nevertheless, the beginning of an ecclesiological disease. The mystique of the "symphonia" (with its only alternative being the monastic "desert" and the individual work for "salvation") obscured the reality of the Church as People of God, as the Church of God and the Body of Christ manifested and edified in every place. It was the triumph of universal ecclesiology in the Byzantine form.

The state and its idea of power are, however, but the first of the two major causes of that disease. The second, not less important in its consequences, was the growth of **religious nationalism**. No one, I think, will deny that one of the fruits of Byzantine Theocracy, which for a long time obscured the life of the Orthodox East, was the growth of those religious nationalisms which little by little identified the Church, her structure, and organization with the **nation**, making her the religious expression of national existence. This national existence, however natural and therefore legitimate it may be, is by its very essence a "partial" existence — the existence as a "part" of humanity which though not necessarily inimical to its other "parts" is nonetheless opposed to them as "one's own" to the "alien." The Early Church knew herself to be the **tertium genus** in which there is neither Greek nor Jew. This means that it proclaimed and conveyed a Life which without rejecting the "partial" and natural life could transform it into "wholeness" or **catholicity**. Hence it must be clear that religious nationalism is essentially a heresy about the Church, for it reduces grace and the new life to "nature" and makes the latter a formal principle of the Church's structure. This does not mean that there can be no Christian people or a Christian vocation of a nation; it means only that a Christian nation (i. e. a nation which has acknowledged its Christian vocation) does not **become** the Church. Because the nature of the Church is the Body of Christ, she belongs to the Kingdom of the age to come and cannot identify herself with anything in "this world..."

Yet it is precisely this religious nationalism in combination

with the new "statelike" concept of power which supplied the basis for the new theory of autocephaly and made it for centuries the "acting canon law" in the Orthodox East. Elsewhere I have tried to show the weak points in contemporary attempts to justify this theory and to erect it into an ecclesiological absolute. From the point of view which interests us here, however, the negative significance of this theory (defended, on the one hand, as a justification of the national divisions of Orthodoxy and, on the other, as sanction for the prevalent administrative centralism) introduces into the Orthodox doctrine of the Church the very elements of "universal ecclesiology" which she rejects and condemns as it is. It obscures the sacramental structure of the Church rooted in its life as Body of Christ, by a "national" structure, thus making a natural organism.

On the essential falsehood of this theory and on its fateful consequences in the life of the Church much has been written. One can affirm that the ecclesiastical consciousness has never "received" it as Tradition — as witness about the nature of the Church. Neither the doctrine of the "five senses" which was the first reaction of Byzantine canonists to Roman claims, nor the absolute "autocephalism" of national theocracies born as it was out the fight against the theocracy of Byzantium, nor the synodal regime of the Russian Church — none of these succeeded in being accepted as an organic expression of Church consciousness or in obscuring to the end the genuine and living sources of ecclesiastical life. This source is still in the true canonical tradition and in the sacraments by which the Church lives and actualizes herself...

Is it necessary to mention all the harm done to the Church by this acting "canon law," disconnected as it is from the living sources of Orthodox ecclesiology? Such as, on the one hand, the bureaucratic spirit prevading the Church, making her the "religious department"; the absence of a living "sobornost"; the transformation of dioceses into mere administrative units living under the control of abstract "centers;" the abyss between the "power" and the body of the Church and, as the result of this, the "revolt of the masses;" the introduction into the Church of the ideas of "representation of the interests" of this or that category be it of the "lay control" or of the division between clergy and laity, etc... Or on the other hand, the deep and tragic division of Orthodoxy into national Churches each indifferent to the other, living in and by

themselves, the crisis of the universal consciousness, and the weakening of the catholic links...

We must hope, however, that this crisis is not a mortal one. The strength of Christ is fulfilled in weakness and the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church. In sufferings and sorrows there appears today a new thirst for the truth about the Church, a new interest in discovering the genuine sources of her life. The question which we raised and attempted to answer, however partially and schematically, in this article, that of "primacy," cannot be separated from a deep and consistent return to Orthodox ecclesiology.

— Notes —

1). For the description and canonical analysis of various forms of primacy cf. N. Zaozersky, **The Ecclesiastical Power** (Sergiev Posad, 1894, in Russian) pp. 218 ff.

2). Much pertaining material has been gathered in the **Opinions** of Russian bishops, presented for the Pre-Sobor Convocation of 1906-1912.

3). cf. N. Afanassieff, "The Permanent and the Changing Elements in Ecclesiastical Canons," in **The Living Tradition**, Paris 1934, pp. 82-96 (in Russian) and also his article "The Canons and The Canonical Consciousness" in **Put** 1933, (in Russian).

4). F. Zaozersky, op. cit., p. 228 ff. — P. V. Gidoulianoff, **The Metropolitan in the First Three Centuries** (Moscow, 1905, in Russian) — N. Milash, **The Canons of the Orthodox Church with Commentaries** (St. Petersburg, 1911, in Russian) Vol. 1, pp. 70 ff. — F. Balsamon, "Comm in Canon 2, Second Ecum. Council" in **Athen. Syntagma**, 2, 171 — V. Bolotov, **Lectures in the History of Ancient Church** (St. Petersburg, 1913, in Russian) vol. 3, p. 210 ff. — V. Myshtzin, **The Organization of the Church in the First Two Centuries** (St. Petersburg, 1909).

5). Cf. for example, the controversy aroused by the Encyclical Letter of the Ecumenical Patriarch for the Sunday of Orthodoxy in 1950; details and bibliography in my article "The Ecumenical Patriarch and the Orthodox Church" in **The Church Messenger of the Exarchate in W. Europe**, 1951.

6). Thus it is obvious, for example, that the fateful "jurisdictional" divisions in the Russian Church outside Russia are ultimately rooted in the question of ecclesiastical **submission** to the various "supreme authorities" i. e. to the problem of primacy. Cf. my essays **The Church and the Ecclesiastical**

Structure (Paris, 1949, in Russian) — “A Controversy on the Church” in **Church Messenger**, 1950, 2 — “On the Neo-Papism,” *ibid*, 1951 (all in Russian). The development of Church life in America, on the other hand, is deeply handicapped by the absence of any connections between the ten Orthodox national jurisdictions, which for the lack of a **center of communion** are practically isolated from each other. Here also the problem of primacy, and consequently, of an **initiative** of a “rapprochement” is quite central.

7). F. Stanislas Jaki, OSB, **Les tendances nouvelles de l'ecclesiology** (Rome 1957).

8). N. Afanassieff, **The Lord's Table** (Paris, 1955 in Russian) — **The Office of Laity in the Church** — (Paris, 1955, in Russian).

9). N. Afanassieff “The Power of Love” in **Church Messenger**, 1950, 1 (22) p. 4 (in Russian).

10). cf. for example, the Statutes of the Russian Church as adopted by the Council of 1917-18 — “in the Orthodox Church of Russia the **Supreme power** belongs to the Local Council...,” “The Diocese is a **part** of the Russian Church...”.

11). Among Russian theologians F. E. Aquilonoff, **The Church: The Doctrinal definitions of the Church and the Apostolic doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ** (St. Petersburg, 1894, in Russian) — V. Troitsky, **Essays in the History of the Doctrine of the Church** (Sergiev Posad, 1912, in Russian) — G. Florovsky, “L'Eglise, sa nature et sa tache” in **L'Eglise Universelle dans le dessein de Dieu** (Paris 1948). On the biblical and patristic ecclesiology cf. P. Mersch, **Le Corps Mystique du Christ, Etudes de Theologie Historique** (2 vol. Paris 1933-36) — G. Bardy, **La Theologie de l'Eglise suivant St. Paul** (Paris 1943) — **La Theologie de l'Eglise de St. Clement de Rome a St. Irene** (Paris 1945) — **La Theologie de l'Eglise de St. Irene au Concile de Nicée** (Paris 1947) — L. Bouyer, **L'Incarnation et l'Eglise Corps du Christ dans la theologie de St. Athanase** (Paris 1943) — H. du Manoir, “L'Eglise, Corps du Christ, chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie” in **Dogme et Spiritualite chez St. Cyrille d'A.** (Paris 1944), pp. 287-366 cf. also S. Jaki, op. cit. pp. 154-203.

12). We find in Suvorov, **The Canon Law** (Jaroslavl, 1889; in Russian) vol. 1. p. 5, a classical expression of this juridical understanding of the Church — “The Church being a visible society cannot be outside law... As a society, it consists of several members, linked to each other by certain relations that grow out of their life in the Church, and it also has an organization with a particular sphere of activity for each organ... The regulation of relations, spheres of activities, and all the means and ways leading to the fulfillment of Church's purpose require the **order of law**. And since “the means and ways” imply practically all aspects of Church life, this means that the whole life of the Church requires the order of law. Outside this order there remains only the Church as “object of faith.” (*ibid* p. 6).

13). This lack of ecclesiology in theological development has been recently stressed by G. Florovsky, *op. cit.* and M. J. Congar in his **Vraie et Fausse Réforme dans l'Eglise**.

14). N. Afanassieff, "Two Ideas of the Church Universal" in **Put.** 1933, p. 16.

15). N. Afanassieff, "The Catholic Church" in **Orthodox Thought**, 11.

16). M. J. Congar, **Chretiens Desunis** (Paris 1937) p. 241. Cf. also my essay "Unity, Division, Reunion in the Light of Orthodox Ecclesiology" in **Theology** (Athens 1951).

17). Here is an example from an article, directed against the very idea of an universal center in the Church: "Not only the Orthodox Church has never had such a center, but this idea completely destroys the mystery of Orthodox ecclesiology, where the Risen Christ, invisibly present, is the center of the Church." (E. Kovalevsky,) "Ecclesiological Problem — On the articles of Fr. Sophrony and Fr. A. Schmemann," in **The Church Messenger of the Moscow Exarchate in W. Europe** (Paris 1950) 2-3, p. 14. This argument is far from being a new one...

18). F. Ignatius of Antioch, **Smyrn.** 8, 2

19). Many details in my unpublished essay **The Unionistic Problem in the Byzantine Church.**

20). N. Afanassieff, "The Catholic Church" p. 21 ff.

21). G. Florovsky, **op. cit.** p. 65. F. Zaozersky, **op. cit.** p. 21 ff.

22). Limitations of space prevent me from dealing adequately with the connection between ecclesiology and liturgical theology. Cf. my article "Liturgical Theology: Its Task and Method" in **St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly**, (October 1957) pp. 16-27. There can be little doubt that all rubrics and rules concerning the unity of the eucharistic gathering (one Eucharist a day on the same altar by the same celebrant etc.) have an ecclesiological significance, i. e. preserve the meaning of Eucharist as expression of the unity and fulness of the Church. Outside this ecclesiological significance they become meaningless, and, as a matter of fact, are more and more frequently ignored or "by-passed" (second altar, "special liturgies" etc.).

23). The basic fact for any theological interpretation of the power of the bishop (or priest) is the absolute connection between ordination and Eucharist. This connection is usually viewed as self-evident, yet it constitutes the starting point for a "theology of power" as **power of grace**.

24). I cannot deal here with the difficult problem of the **parish** in its relation to the diocese. Evidently, the Early Church knew only the community headed by the Bishop who was the normal celebrant of the Eucharist, the teacher and the pastor of his church. The presbyters constituted his council — the **presbyterium** — F. J. Colson, **L'Eveque dans les communautés primitives** (Paris 1951) — H. Chirat, **L'Assemblée Chrétienne à l'âge apostolique** (Paris 1949) and symposium **Etudes sur le Sacrement de l'Ordre** (Paris 1957). The division of the diocese into parishes and the corresponding transformation of the presbyter into the parish rector came later, and this change has never been seriously studied and interpreted theologically. In any case it cannot con-

tradic the basic principles of Eucharistic ecclesiology, for it would then contradict the nature of the Church.

25). Cf. the already mentioned articles of E. Kovalevsky and also Hierom. Sophrony, "The Unity of the Church in the Image of Trinity" in **The Church Mess. of Moscow Exarchate in W. Europe** (Paris 1950) 2-3, pp. 8-33.

26). N. Milash, *op. cit.* pp. 46-47 cf. Dom B. Botte, "L'Ordre d'apres les prières d'ordination" in **Le Sacrement de l'ordre**, P. 31.

27). Hippolyt of Rome, **Apost. Tradition** (ed. Sources Chretiennes) pp. 26-33

28). On the notion of witness in sacraments cf. N. Afanassieff, "Sacramenta et Sacramentalia" in **Orthodox Thought**, 10.

29). J. Meyendorff, in **Maison-Dieu**, 26, 1954.

30). Cf. Iren. of Lyons, **Adv. Haer.** IV, III, 3, and G. Bardy, **La Theologie de l'Eglise de St. Clement de Rome a St. Irene**, p. 183 ff. On diadoche in Irinaeus cf. E. Caspar, **Die alteste Romische Bischofliste** (Berlin 1926) p. 444.

31). For this reason both election and ordination are essential and necessary elements in the Orthodox rite of the appointment of Bishops.

32). Iren. of Lyons, **Adv. Haer** — III, XXIV, 1.

33). N. Zaozersky, *op. cit.* p. 223.

34). Cf. A. Khomiakoff, "Letter to the Editor of L'Union Chretienne" in **Complete Works**, 1860, t. 2, p. 30 ff.

35). G. Florovsky, "The Sacrement of Pentecost" (A Russian View on Apostolic Succession) in **The Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius**, March 1934. N 23, pp. 29-34.

36). A. Pokrovsky, **The Synods of the Early Church** (Sergiev Posad 1914 in Russian).

37). V. Bolotov, *op. cit.*, t. 3.

38). N. Milash, *op. cit.* v. I, pp. 194-204 — To E. R. Hardy this canon indicates that the Bishop of Alexandria was de facto Metropolitan of the whole Egypt cf. **Christian Egypt Church and People** (New York, 1952) pp. 54-59.

39). "Encycl. S. Offic. Ad Episcopos Angliae, 16 Sept. 1864" in **Denzinger-Bawwart**, ed. 10, n. 1686.

40). "The Catholic Church" in **Orthodox Thought**, 11.

41). Much evidence, although analysed from a Roman Catholic point of view has been gathered by P. Batiffol, **L'Eglise Naissante et le Catholicisme** (Paris 1927) — **La Paix Constantinienne** (Paris 1929) — **Le Siege Apostolique** (Paris 1924) — **Cathedra Petri** (Paris 1938).

42). It is noteworthy that after having analyzed all early Christian evidence on the primacy of Rome, Batiffol reaches an almost identical conclusion —

“The papacy of the first centuries is the authority exercised by the Church of Rome among other Churches, authority which consists in caring after their conformity with the authentic tradition of faith... and which is claimed by no other church but the Church of Rome” — **Cathedra Petri**, p. 28.

43). cf. G. Florovsky, “the Sacrement of Pentecost” p. 31.

44). The most “theological” expression of this theory is to be found in the articles, mentioned above, of the Hieromonk Sophrony and E. Kovalevsky. In a more juridical way it is defended by S. V. Troitsky; cf. J. Meyendorff, “Constantinople and Moscow” in **Church Messenger**, 16, pp. 5-9. Finally its justification in terms of ecclesiastical nationalism is given by M. Polksky, **The Canonical Status of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Government** (Jordanville 1948) cf. my essay “The Church and Ecclesiastical Structure” (Paris 1949).

45). M. Skaballanovich, **The Byzantine State and the Church in XI Century** (St. Petersburg 1884 in Russian); E. Gerland, “Die Vorgeschichte des Patriarchats des Kpl” in **Byz. Neues Jahrb.**, IX, 218.

46). I. Sokolov, “The Election of Bishops in Byzantium” in **Vizantisky Vremennik**, 22, 1915-16 (in Russian).

47). cf. my essays “The Destiny of Byzantine Theocracy” in **Orthodox Thought** 6, (in Russian) and “Byzantine Theocracy and the Orthodox Church” in **St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly**, 1953.



The Highest Authority in the Church

by Serge Verkhovskoy

1. Although God has absolute power over the whole inanimate world, He Himself has created all spiritual beings free and has thus renounced the possibility of determining the human will without its consent. Nevertheless, obedience to the divine will is an absolute condition for our perfection and happiness. God in His goodness, omnipotence and wisdom is the only Being who can lead us to perfection. It is but natural to trust the Divine leadership, to believe that God is more concerned about our wellbeing than we ourselves are. The fear of God is a virtue. In its highest form it is the fear of offending the One we love and venerate above all. In its lowest form it is the fear of punishment, which indeed has its justification in the idea that God is our Supreme Judge.

God has revealed his will to mankind. We must accept it even if we don't understand it. There can be no better proof of the sincerity of our obedience to God than self-sacrifice for His sake.

We are free to reject the will of God and we too often use this freedom. But those who place themselves outside Divine authority become the antagonists of God and can no longer count on His blessings.

The Bible teaches us that the first man disobeyed God. As a result of this disobedience the entire mankind became sinful, ignorant, suffering and mortal. Although corrupted, mankind continued to exist in the world and Providence did not abandon it. Nevertheless, the world could never be saved for its existence was inseparable from evil.

It was necessary to renew or recreate the world. The First-born among these renewed creatures was Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. He became the foundation of the Church, i. e. of the kingdom of God "coming with power." In this kingdom the will of God is always fulfilled. We are so accustomed to seeing sins and even crimes in the Church that we are ready to admit that the Church itself is sinful. This is a grave and dangerous error. That which is against the will of God cannot, strictly speaking, be-

long to nature of the Church. Sinners can be members of the Church if they do not identify themselves with their sins or errors. However, unrepented sinners and heretics are excommunicated either openly — by the Church, or invisibly by God Himself. Our sins and errors as such never belong to the very nature of the Church, which is necessarily holy and infallible. This may seem paradoxical to us for we constantly see sins and errors in Christian society. But this society does not entirely coincide with the Church. In the light of Christ's parable in Matthew 13:24-30, the Church on earth cannot be divided by a vertical line into good and evil men, but it can and must be divided by a horizontal line, which divides every member of the Church on earth into the "new creature," living in Christ, and "the old creature," not yet renewed by the grace of God. Evildoers or heretics among Christians risk their own salvation and are guilty of abusing the gift of salvation which they receive from the Church. They may attempt to corrupt the Church, but they cannot succeed, because the omnipotent God is reigning and watching over it. The more we sin or err, the greater is our separation from the Church.

The Church was created by God. It is the unity of men in Jesus Christ. We are united with Christ by the Holy Spirit, and united in Christ with God Himself. This unity of God and man is the very essence of the Church. In the Church, and only in the Church, do we transcend our nature and participate in the existence of the Absolute Being. According to patristic tradition such **theosis** or divinization is the final goal of Christian life.

Our existence is by nature unstable, has its origin in others and is always in danger of ceasing. But in God we participate in an eternal and selfsupporting existence. We are limited in all respects. But in God we find an unlimited being or the fullness of existence. We live in constant struggle, division and disorder. But in God we participate in absolute harmony and unity. God is not only an ideal of our minds. He is the Perfect Reality, acting in the whole world and in our lievs and revealing Himself to us. This Divine Reality is completely personal. God is the Holy Trinity. Each Divine Person is free and conscious. In His freedom God eternally realizes the perfect Good. In his consciousness He is the perfect Wisdom. The life of the Holy Trinity manifests its omnipotent power and absolute holiness. Its content is love and knowledge, which are the sources of the creation of the world.

Divinization is our union with the Holy Trinity. We are liberated from the evil and bondage of this world by the freedom of God and we live participating in the divine perfections. Divine Wisdom becomes our wisdom and the love of God inspires our spiritual and earthly activity... Christ is our "way." We live in Him and He is in us. His life in us is the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit we become in Jesus Christ the children of God the Father whose will becomes our will. Thus we attain "divinization" in all that it implies.

To accept the very life of God as our own and to completely submit ourselves to it is the highest form of Christian obedience to God. If we do not possess the Spirit of God, we can only be His slaves, obedient to Him in our external behaviour, or rebellious against Him in our sins. Slavelike obedience was not sufficient even in the Old Testament, much less in the New. If the will of God is not our will and His truth is not our truth, we are not in the Church.

We know that God is our King and Christ the Head of the Church and that we must worship and venerate Them. Nevertheless, the greatest majority of Christians constantly disregard the fact that real obedience to our Heavenly King and God is the only real Christian life. We oversimplify the idea of Christian obedience by considering merely the simplest moral laws and rules of the Church. We act according to our own will and cover our disobedience to God by superficial piety. That which we call the life of the Church is very often the life of our sinful human society having but the appearance of Christianity, because the Church is the kingdom of God and there is no Church where the will of God is not done. The presence of grace and of true Christian faith and love are the best criteria of the reality of the Church. "Where there is the Holy Spirit, there is the Church," says St. Irenaeus of Lyon and, "where is the Church, there is the Holy Spirit! and He is Truth."

Since Apostolic times Christians have been often concerned with the problem of the authority in the Church and of its bearers: apostles, bishops, councils etc. But the real problem is whether Christian society and hierarchy are obedient to God and live in Christ. The organization and discipline of the earthly Church can be perfect, yet if its life and activity are not inspired by the Spirit of God they are not even Christian.

2. How is God ruling the Church? First by the omnipotent power of His Providence, especially by the action of His grace, without which nothing can exist in the Church. Secondly, through the Truth which was revealed to the Church by Jesus Christ, the prophets, the apostles and the fathers. Thirdly, through all the divine institutions of the Church. Those members of the hierarchy and laity who follow their own will and opinions betray their faith and the Church. Those who are faithful to the doctrine and laws of the Church base their activity on divine principles. They can however incur difficulties when they have to interpret this doctrine or apply these laws to particular cases. A vital understanding and interpretation of the Divine Truth, a wise application of the canons and moral laws are given only to those who are directly enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit. Without a constant action of Divine Power the Church could have no living wisdom and no ability to act in the Spirit of God.

Divine Providence acts in the Church in two ways, one of which we can call external and the other internal. God does not determine our will, but He can encourage or stop any human action. Just as the accomplishments and successes of individuals or society depend on God, so does the life of the Church which God can allow to prosper or ruin, although He acts not arbitrarily, but according to our behavior. He rewards, punishes or leads us through trials necessary for our perfection. He takes special care of His Church and of His people. It is sufficient to remember the Sermon on the Mount and the words of St. Paul "that all things work together for good to them that love God" or "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." God chastises us "for our profit that we might be partakers of His Holiness." Christians who have real faith and the sincere desire to serve God will never be abandoned by God. If we know from history that entire churches were sometimes annihilated, we must admit that God probably did not expect more fruits from them.

The inner action of divine Providence is the action of His grace. All that truly belongs to the Church, to its nature and life, is the fruit of cooperation between Divine grace and the good will of men. God sanctifies all that is holy, He illuminates all the true teachers of the Church and consecrates its leaders by His grace. We often believe that baptism and some Christian education are sufficient to make a good Christian, and that ordination combined with some

elements of theology and some qualities of leadership make a good priest. However, grace of baptism or priesthood can be effective only if it is working in us constantly and is constantly growing. Even a naturally weak man can be an excellent bishop if he lives in grace. If the hierarchy relies on itself and considers its task as an earthly activity, it will bring the Church to decay and heresy.

The Church receives the knowledge of Truth from the Holy Spirit. We believe that not only the prophets and apostles but also the Councils and the Fathers were inspired by God. All that truly belongs to the Holy Tradition is a result of a divine illumination of the Church. God grants truth and also gives the power to understand and interpret it. This Divine illumination is a continuous principle of Divine guidance. Each ministry in the Church is based on a special grace, which must inspire and determine the whole activity of the minister.

The action of divine grace is always free. God gives His grace when and how He wants. Nevertheless He acts foreseeing our reaction and in answer to it. We accept His grace in the measure of our good will and preparedness. If we wish we can reject it entirely.

Divine Providence is not only the source of guidance and inspiration but also a power which judges us. This judgment is not often obvious in our earthly existence but we know that all Christians as well as all Churches in the world are already and will be finally judged by God. Consequently, disobedience to God results in disaster either on earth or after the end of the world. God can tolerate abuses of His will but He finally purifies His church of evil and evil ones and brings all those who are saved to obedience. To be saved means to accept freely the will of God in all its forms and expressions.

3. God is the Holy Trinity. If one is obedient to God, he is obedient to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The unity of Divine will does not exclude its trinitarian character. It is therefore legitimate to ask what is the difference between the authority of the Father and those of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The source of divine authority, according to the New Testament, is undoubtedly the Father. It is clearly stated that the Son and the Holy Spirit do the will of the Father and that the object of Their activity is to bring the world to absolute obedience to the Father. For this reason the Father is preferably named the "Monarch"

or the "King" by the Holy Fathers. St. Paul says that Head of Christ is God the Father (I Corinthians 11:3) and that Christ will submit himself to the Father after the end of the world (I Corinthians 15:27). The Holy Scriptures as well as Tradition especially ascribe the name of Creator to the Father. If the Father is the primary source of the existence of His Son, His Spirit and of the whole creation, His will determines all the more the existence of all beings. The unity of the Divine will must be explained by the fact that the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, being consubstantial with the Father, accept absolutely His will as Their own.

The Son of God fulfills the will of the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the hypostatical Word and Wisdom of the Father, He is the Truth and the Wisdom of the world. As the Messiah, sent into the world by the Father, He is the Saviour. The Son of God was not only sent into the world but was made man. Therefore, the authority of Christ is both divine and human. He is the Son of the King reigning together with His Father, but His kingship in all its forms is always not only divine but also human. As God, Jesus Christ is King eternally, but He became the Head of the Church in His incarnation, through His earthly life, preaching and ministry, self-sacrifice, descent, into hell, resurrection and ascension. He is the Founder and the foundation of the Church. The Church is consubstantial with Him. The nature of the Church is the nature of Christ because it is His body. We must understand that the true nature and life of the Church are essentially determined by the life and the nature of Christ Himself. To be obedient to Christ as the Head of the Church, consequently, means doing only that which is strictly conforming to the spirit, the teaching and the will of Christ. If Christ has "purchased the Church with His own blood," the Church, its hierarchy and members must live in Christ even if they have to suffer for it. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ as man, "earned" somehow to become the Head of the Church. The Church in its turn must deserve being the true bride of Christ. One of the Fathers says that the Church is "built on the Cross."

The descent into hell and the liberation from it of all the righteous is the proof of the victory of Jesus Christ over Satan and evil. The same power is given by Christ to the Church, but we can exercise it only if we possess the same spirit of holiness and love for sinners and, the same spiritual strength as Christ.

The resurrection is the victory of Jesus Christ over death and corruption. The Church also has the power to resurrect human souls in Christ, which is a certain pledge of resurrection in life eternal.

Ascending as God and Man into heaven, Jesus Christ founded the Kingdom of Heaven and opened its gates to man. Therefore the Church is both a heavenly and an earthly reality. Those who are in heaven do not separate themselves from the earthly church. Those who live on earth must live as if they already participated in the heavenly Kingdom.

We have said that the Son of God reigns over the world. St. Paul teaches that Christ is constantly striving to submit the whole of mankind to God. Likewise the Church is universal by nature and must constantly strive to include the whole world in itself.

The Father "committed all judgement into His Son." Jesus Christ said that His Word, i. e. His truth, judges us already. We are judged imminently by the very divine laws of life. The ways of evil are necessarily the ways of corruption. Divine Providence does not leave us unpunished. After our death Christ will judge us directly and personally. At the Last Judgment He will judge the whole world, the Church and all His servants.

The Father gave "all power in heaven and on earth" to His Son. Therefore it is impossible to oppose the kingdom of the Son to that of the Father. The Father gave His own power and His own kingdom to the Son.

The Holy Spirit is the King of the world as God and the Giver of life. He gives existence and life to the whole creation accomplishing or perfecting the will of the Father and the eternal ideas of the Son. According to the Fathers He is the Spirit of the Kingship or the Power of the royalty of God. Through Him the Holy Trinity reigns over the universe. His power over the Church is absolute, since the Church cannot live without grace and grace is particularly the gift of the Holy Spirit. The whole sacramental life of the Church is the action of the Divine Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit does not reign over the Church for Himself: He builds the body of Christ and through the power of His Grace Christians become the children of the Father.

4. The authority of God in the Church is really absolute and vitally essential for the Church. Strictly speaking, God is the **only authority in the Church**. Nevertheless, we may also speak of the

authority of the Church itself. Jesus Christ said that those who are not obedient to the Church are no better than heathens and publicans. Evidently the authority of the Church is not purely human. It derives directly and exclusively from God and basically coincides with divine authority. The Church possesses it as a sacred or divine institution, based on dogmas, canons and moral commandments. They are the only foundations of the authority of the Church and its only true criteria. But, as we have pointed out, they become a living power in the life of the Church only inasmuch as the latter is directly guided and inspired by God. Therefore, it is impossible to separate the authority and the power of the Church from that of God. **To rule in the name of God without God or against Him is the worst of sins.**

When we say that authority belongs primarily to the Church and not to any part of it or any group of its members, we express a very important Orthodox dogma. The Orthodox concept of the Church affirms that the Church is not composed of separate parts, established as if it were separately by God. The church is a whole, a body. Even Jesus Christ as the Head of His body is within the Church as one of its members. Therefore the authority of the Church does not coincide with that of the hierarchy if we consider the latter as independent from the rest of the Church. The ultimate authority and judgment belong always to the unity of all Christians with their Divine Head. The Church as a whole has not only the right but the duty to disobey and even consider as excommunicated any minister, should he become openly unfaithful. Orthodox people have on several occasions used this privilege in their struggle against heresies, especially the "Unia" which was introduced by corrupt representatives of the hierarchy. The whole body of the Church is the bearer and protector of the Orthodox teaching. The doctrine of the "royal priesthood" means that all the members of the Church participate in all its functions and activities.

Nevertheless, not all Christians have the same vocations, nor do they participate equally in Church activities. The Church has an organized leadership established by God Himself. This leadership has the right and duty to rule and to teach the people and to perform services and sacraments. The hierarchy is fully responsible before God for the life of the Church and has to carry out His will concerning the Church. But this will of God both determines and limits the functions of the priesthood. The rights of the hierarchy

are not indefinite or unlimited; they are clearly defined and explained in the canon law, the Holy Scripture and Tradition. Leading the Church and representing it, the hierarchy must itself be completely submitted to God and to the Church.

The highest position within hierarchy is that of bishops. Each bishop has full authority over his diocese. As to the whole Church, it is ruled by the Episcopate in its unity. The ecumenical council is only an instrument, an organized expression of the will of the Episcopate. The evident consensus of the Episcopate can replace an ecumenical council. Many truths of the Orthodox faith were never approved by an ecumenical council, since the last council took place in the 8-th c. However, even from the canonical point of view they must be considered as true dogmas inasmuch as they are obviously accepted by all Orthodox bishops. This applies, for example, to the dogmas of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father; of the original sin in the Holy Virgin Mary; of the prevalence of the authority of an ecumenical council over that of any bishop including the Pope, etc. At present, when it is so easy to obtain the opinions of all Orthodox bishops by correspondence, it would be possible to use this method instead of an ecumenical council, were it difficult to convene it. On the other hand, even an ecumenical council must be accepted by the whole body of bishops, especially if not all churches were adequately represented. The third ecumenical council is the best example of this. Its decisions were accepted by the Antiochian church, which was absent from the council, only after long negotiations with St. Cyril who presided over this council. The "formula of Union" which was the result of this negotiation formulated the Orthodox doctrine even better than the 12 Anathematisms of St. Cyril which were approved by the Council.

All this, however, does not invalidate the principle that of all ecclesiastical institutions the ecumenical council is the one possessing the highest authority. In fact the decisions of all councils which were sufficiently representative of the Church and free in their deliberation have always been true. The decision of the council may be true even if these conditions are not fulfilled, but in this case the Church has a legitimate reason to raise doubts about the council and examine its decisions. We must mention here the problem of the relationship between the Council and the Primate (Pope, Patriarch, Metropolitan) within any Church. Dogmatically it is evident that the general council of bishops is the supreme power in

the Church. However, the authority of metropolitan and patriarchs became very great during the middle ages. In its legitimate forms this authority may be described as follows: each bishop is the head of his diocese. No one can give him orders concerning its administration. Metropolitans or patriarchs can intervene only if the bishop violates the teaching or laws of the Church. But they cannot personally judge a bishop: this right belongs to the council of bishops. Likewise in matters concerning the general life of the metropolitan district or patriarchate, no bishop has the right to act against the will of his metropolitan or patriarch who are directly in charge of these matters, although under control and supervision of the local council of bishops.

It is our conviction that the same principle should be applied to the Primate of the Orthodox Church (e. g. the Ecumenical Patriarch), just, as before the schism it governed the function of the Bishop of Rome in the Church Universal. This is how we could tentatively describe the role of such primacy: The Primate is in charge of all matters of general interest for the Orthodox Church. He acts, however, under the supervision and with the guidance of an ecumenical council or synod of all the heads of the autocephalous churches (or their official representatives). He has executive but not legislative power and is responsible to the council of churches. His functions are: in case of disorders in any local church, disorders that cannot be resolved by this church, it is his duty to intervene and, if necessary, to convene a general council of this church, or a synod of the representatives of all Orthodox churches, or even an ecumenical council. He has no authority to solve this crisis personally, but must use normal canonical channels. He has no right to give orders to bishops or to intervene in the life of their dioceses except for special reasons. He organizes the cooperation of the autocephalous churches and supervises the execution of all plans accepted in common by them. He convenes (with the approval of all churches) the ecumenical council and presides over it. He is also the chairman of all general synods or meetings of the Church. In doctrinal matters it is his special duty to watch over the integrity of Orthodox teaching in all churches, to draw to the attention of bishops any danger of heresy, and to help solving all doctrinal problems by channels of normal magisterium or by the council of bishops.

If we ask whether the functions of the Bishop of Rome before the schism and those of the Patriarch of Constantinople afterwards

fit the description given above the answer cannot be a simple yes or no. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that the Pope and the ecumenical patriarch were always recognized as first bishops in the Church. But on the other hand, their primacy was never fully determined by the canons and its character changed more than once. Very often it depended on particular historic circumstances or on the person of the primate. Yet it is possible to find in the past all elements enumerated, above with one exception: the control of the first see by the common councils of Churches. The authority of the ecumenical councils was indisputable, but these were very rare. During some periods of the Middle Ages many Eastern Patriarchs lived almost constantly in Constantinople and the jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarch was spread all over Eastern Europe. It was therefore easy to obtain a consensus of the churches. But this situation was exceptional and even abnormal.

6. Orthodox clergy and theologians of the last centuries are inclined to speak of a "primacy of honor," but no one has clearly explained in what this "honor" consists or why the Church needs such a primacy. If the "primacy of honor" means nothing more than the obligation to respect the first patriarch more than the others, it has no real importance for the Church. Moreover it contradicts historical evidence and is not justified by the real needs of the Church.

On the one hand, we must recognize that the central organization was always weak in the Eastern Church and lacked clear definition. The absence of strong central organization is explained by the fact that it was not considered spiritually and dogmatically necessary. In general all forms of organized unity of dioceses developed very slowly and for practical rather than dogmatical reasons.

On the other hand, the centralized government, as developed in the Roman West was not accepted by the Orthodox Church. Why? Did we not recognize a certain primacy of Rome before the great schism? We will not deny it, but this primacy has very little in common with the Catholic doctrine of Papacy. Roman Catholic theologians themselves admit that after the XI century Papacy has become radically different from that of the early period of Christianity, and they explain this difference by their theory of dogmatical development. But we, Orthodox, do not believe in any essential development of dogmas. We admit development in the explanations and formulation of dogmas as well as the growth of the earthly institutions of

the Church. But we do not believe that anything really essential changes in the Church. To us Papacy as accepted by Roman Catholicism is a wrong innovation.

Papacy claims absolute power over the whole Church. For us such power can be ascribed to God alone. In the administration of the Church the power of the Pope is that of an absolute monarch. But in our belief no one has such authority over any bishop or over the Church in general. The Pope is proclaimed to be infallible but this gift does not belong to any individual, except Jesus Christ who is God. The gift of infallibility is given to the Church in its unity and can be expressed only in unity. The Pope is considered by Roman Catholics as supreme judge of the Church, but for us councils alone possess this privilege: an individual cannot be a perfect bearer of justice. The Pope even claims the power over the world and civil authorities. We believe that the Church is called to preach the truth, to unite all the faithful in their religious life and to rebuke any evil in the world. But the Lord did not entrust the task of governing the world and the State to the Church. Christians have all the responsibilities of citizens, but the duty to govern the states belongs to the laity and not to the clergy. The canons even forbid clergymen to hold civil positions.

Orthodox rejection of the Papacy does not mean that our Church has no need of strengthening its central organization. The spiritual unity expressed in the unity of dogmas, institutions and ideals of life cannot replace the unity of organization even if the latter is less important than our unity in God.

A strong center could do much for the Orthodox Church. It would remind the Orthodox people of their sacred duty to the Orthodox Church as a whole. We must admit that millions of Orthodox are far more concerned with their national churches or even with their particular diocese or parish than with the Orthodox Church on the whole. This lack of the sense of unity has most disastrous effects. One of the important tasks of an universal center would be giving true canonical organization to orthodox churches in countries where Orthodoxy is still newly established (Western Europe, North America etc). But there exist many canonical problems even in the old churches...

Our Church needs unity of action in its relationship with the non-Orthodox, for otherwise we cannot expect to succeed in any kind of negotiation with the heterodox churches.

Many theological and practical problems must at least be discussed together by the representatives of all orthodox churches.

The bad experience which the Orthodox Church has had with Rome can lead us to the idea of a permanent universal synod under the presidency of the ecumenical patriarch. It must consist of bishops representing all autocephalous churches. Proposals of this synod would be studied by experts appointed by the Synod and the hierarchy of member churches.* The proposal will be considered as accepted only if the majority of bishops of each orthodox church approve it. The ecumenical synod must be the executive organ to carry out all the decisions of the Orthodox episcopate inasmuch as they cannot be enacted by each Church separately.

In conclusion we would like to emphasize the principal ideas of this article.

1. The highest authority belongs to God. Members of the Church can sin and err but their sins and errors do not belong to the nature of the Church.

2. God rules the Church by the power of His providence and grace, through the truth revealed by Him and the sacred institutions established by Him.

3. The authority of the Church as a whole is above all particular authorities existing in it.

4. The episcopate has the right and the duty to govern the Church. An ecumenical council is the most perfect expression of the will of the episcopate. Its authority is higher than that of any other person or organised body.

5. A permanent central organization of the Church is not considered by Orthodoxy as absolutely necessary dogmatically or spiritually but it is practically useful for the Church.

6. In the past the central organization of the Church was not clearly established and determined by the canons. The Roman idea of papacy was rejected. Nevertheless it is certainly desirable for our Church to possess a strong central organization in the form of a synod as described above.



* Bishops and theologians would be also invited to discuss this proposal. After the matter is sufficiently clarified it is submitted to the decision of all Orthodox bishops.

In Memoriam

Professor Anton V. Kartashoff

† September 10, 1960

St. Sergius Academy in Paris, the **alma mater** of several of us here at St. Vladimir's, has suffered its second irreparable loss in one year: after Father Cyprian Kern, the Lord has called to Him **Anton Vladimirovich Kartashoff**, Professor of Church History and Old Testament, one of the founders of St. Sergius, and one of its most faithful spiritual leaders throughout the thirty years of its existence.

Born in 1875 in the family of a simple peasant, Prof. Kartashoff graduated from St. Petersburg Theological Academy where he studied under the famous Church historian V. V. Bolotov. After a few years of teaching he left the Academy, finding its official, narrow, and conformist spirit incompatible with his prophetic vision and his desire for a total spiritual and intellectual revival of the Church. After 1905, while teaching at the Women's College and working at St. Petersburg Public Library, he became one of the leaders of this revival, which so deeply marked the pre-revolutionary years in Russia. Together with Merejkovsky and Rosanov, Bulgakov and Berdyaev, he took an active part in the Religious-Philosophical Society, the focal point of this great movement, lecturing, writing, teaching, and discussing. The role he played in this "Russian Renaissance" of the 20th Century is yet to be evaluated by his future biographer. In 1917 after the February Revolution he became Minister of Cults in the Temporary Government and in this capacity greeted the historic All Russian Sobor of 1917-18.

Having left Russia after the Bolshevik coup d'etat, he was the first to respond when Metropolitan Eulogios decided to open a theological school in Paris. And it was he who convinced the undecided Metropolitan to drop the idea of a mere "pastoral school" and to create a graduate school of high learning, to establish in the very heart of the West a real center of Orthodox thought and culture. Since 1925 Prof. Kartashoff identified himself entirely with the life of the school. No former student of St. Sergius will ever forget his brilliant and inspiring lectures in Church History, his enthusiastic faith in the universal mission of Orthodoxy... Merciless to every form of bigotry, superstition and narrow mindedness, he was at the same time deeply rooted in the life of the Church. One could see him every day, standing among the students in the choir and singing with them the daily services...

Only a year ago appeared the two monumental volumes of his **History of the Russian Church** — his last gift to Orthodoxy theology (cf. my review in the "New Review," vol. 59) His earlier works include a book on Biblical Criticism and several articles. His "History of the Ecumenical Councils" awaits a publisher.

His death is a loss for the entire Orthodox Church. Those of us to whom it was given to know him and to work with him will ever thank God for this great example of courage, faithfulness and dedication in the sacred service of Truth.

Alexander Schmemann



The Seminary

The Twenty Second Academic Year Begins

On September 21 the opening exercises for the 1960-61 academic year were held at the Holy Protection Cathedral in New York City. His Eminence Metropolitan Leonty, President of the Seminary, officiated assisted by His Grace Archbishop Ireney of Boston, the V. Rev. Alexander Schmemann, Vice-Dean, the V. Rev. Firmilian Ocokolijch, Dean of the Serbian Cathedral, the V. Rev. Florian Goldau, Rector of the Romanian Parish, the Rev. John Meyendorff, Professor of Patristics, the Rev. Anastasios Tsonis, Rector of the Albanian Parish, and the Rev. Anthony Khouri of the Syrian Archdiocese. At the end of the service Metropolitan Leonty presented to Father Schmemann the blue and silver pectoral cross, insignia of the Doctor's degree granted to him in July 1959 by St. Sergius Academy in Paris.

The new academic year began with a total enrollment of 40 students belonging to eight national jurisdictions.

Professors Arseniev and Verkhovsky Honored by St. Sergius.

On the occasion of its thirty-fifth anniversary, St. Sergius Theological Academy in Paris awarded the degree of Doctor of Ecclesiastical Sciences **honoris causa** to two members of our Faculty — Professor **Nicholas Arseniev** and Professor **Sergius Verkhovsky**.

Professor Arseniev, formerly of the University of Moscow and the Orthodox Faculty in Warsaw joined St. Vladimir's in 1947. He is Professor of New Testament and Apologetics. One of the senior Orthodox theologians, he is widely known in the West for his numerous books on Orthodox spirituality and his unceasing efforts to propagate Orthodox thought in the Western world.

Professor Verkhovsky, a graduate and former professor at St. Sergius, went to St. Vladimir's in 1952. He is Professor of Dogmatic Theology and, as Provost, has been in charge of the students' life since 1955.

To both an enthusiastic "Mnohaya Lieta" was sung by the Faculty and students at the reception that followed the opening exercises.

Ordinations

Fr. Vladimir Soroka ('60) on June 12, to the Holy Priesthood by His Grace Archbishop Benjamin of Pittsburgh and West Virginia. In Charleroi, Pa.

Fr. John Psinka ('61) on June 26, to Holy Priesthood by His Grace Archbishop Dimitry of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. In Newark, N. J.

Fr. Michael Radyk ('63) by His Grace Archbishop Benjamin for Alaska. Fr. Radyk is on a two-year leave of absence in Sitka.

Fr. Anastasios Tsonis ('60) on February 7, to Holy Priesthood, by His Grace Bishop Fan Noli. In Albanian Church, N. Y. C.

Fr. Christopher Penning ('60) on April 16, to Holy Priesthood, by His Eminence Metropolitan Antony Bashir. In Brooklyn, N. Y.

Fr. Kirill Arihara ('58) by His Grace Archbishop Nikon. In Tokyo, Japan.

Fr. George Shaheen ('58) by His Eminence Metropolitan Antony. To Holy Priesthood in Montreal, Canada.

Fr. Anthony Khouri ('62) by His Eminence Metropolitan Antony. To Holy Priesthood in Boston, Mass.

Fr. Thomas Popovich ('61) by His Grace Archbishop Ireney. To Diaconate on September 21, 1960. In N. Y. C.

Father Schmemann to Teach at Columbia.

Fr. Alexander Schmemann was appointed Adjunct Professor at the Department of Slavic Studies, Columbia University, and will teach a course on Russian Religious Thought. He is also Lecturer in Eastern Orthodoxy at Union Theological Seminary, N. Y. C.

Father Meyendorff Appointed Lecturer at Dumbarton Oaks.

Fr. John Meyendorff was appointed Lecturer in Byzantine Theology at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Center of Harvard University.

The Serbian Patriarch to Send a Student to St. Vladimir's

His Holiness Patriarch German of the Serbian Church informed the Faculty that one student from the Orthodox Faculty of Belgrade will come to St. Vladimir's every year for graduate studies.

Other News

● **Professor Arseniev** is on Sabbatical leave for the Fall Semester. He is teaching at the University of Vienna.

● The following articles for the Encyclopedia Britannica are to be written by members of our faculty; **Fr. Schmemann** — "American Orthodox Church," "Khomiakoff," "Bulgakoff," „Lukaris," „Ikon." **Fr. Meyendorff** — „Gregory Palamas."

● **Fr. Meyendorff** delivered a lecture at the Study Conference of S. C. M. in Strasbourg, France, and preached at the Youth Rally in Lausanne, Switzerland.

- **Fr. Schmemann** attended the conference of Professors of Ecumenics and the Triennial Conference of the Inter Seminary Movement in Denver, Colorado, where he spoke on, "The Ethical Implications of the Word and Sacraments."
- **Professor Kesich** will give a course on World Religions at Hofstra College, Long Island.
- **Mr. Andrey Kodjak** is on leave of absence to complete his Ph. D. program at the University of Pennsylvania.



Book Reviews

Francis Dvornik, THE IDEA OF APOSTOLICITY IN BYZANTIUM AND THE LEGEND OF THE APOSTLE ANDREW. (Dumbarton Oaks Studies IV). Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1958. Pp. x, 342. \$6.00

This book by one of the world's leading Byzantinists, Professor Dvornik of Harvard's Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, is an exhaustive historical study of the idea of apostolicity in Byzantium and what Dvornik considers to be the legend of the Apostle Andrew in connection with Constantinople. This book was written in an attempt to clarify the Byzantine policy of adaptation of political administrative forms to ecclesiastical administrative forms and to show the West in effect forced the East to adopt the argument of apostolicity as a counter claim to the West's demands for submission and primacy on the basis of St. Peter's apostolicity in Rome.

Father Dvornik's book is much too fully worked out to be fairly discussed in any great detail in such a brief review as this but some major points of the book should be noted. The story of the foundation of Constantinople by Andrew, Dvornik admits, could very well have originated at the end of the third or fourth century. However, though this was possible, on the basis of historical and philological evidence, there is no indication that it was so formulated at such an early date. No one in the Byzantine world saw the need for an argument from apostolic foundation for the ecclesiastical organization. It was not until the sixth and seventh centuries that the need was seen for such an argument on a major scale and the first codification of the legend of Andrew's founding of the see of Byzantium can be safely and conservatively dated toward the close of the seventh and the first half of the eighth centuries. This, of course, does not preclude the existence of an oral tradition or even of an earlier written tradition. Dvornik maintains that every condition for an Andrew tradition existed from the time of Constantius at the latest. This acceptance by both East and West was made plausible by the belief that Andrew preached the Christian Gospel in Scythia and Achaia and certainly Thrace and Byzantium appeared to be the obvious connections between his missionary work in these two regions.

Dvornik cogently demonstrates that the Byzantines were much longer influenced by the principles of adaptation of the political administrative forms of the Roman Empire to ecclesiastical organization than were the Westerners, that this was indeed a principle of the early Christian Church and not an unusual innovation. East and West were early developing in different directions, using different arguments at different times.

It was later that Rome tried to counter the claims of Constantinople to apostolic foundations, thus reversing her own previous position. In Dvornik's own concluding words:

"In reflecting on this change of attitude on the part of the West toward Byzantine claims regarding the apostolic character of the see of Constantinople, it is a great temptation to conclude these considerations with the remark: **Difficile est saturam non scribere.** There is, however, nothing satirical in the history of this dispute. From beginning to end this argument over two principles of ecclesiastical organization — that of apostolicity and that of adaptation to the political organization of the Empire — was conducted earnestly and passionately. The lack of understanding of the first and the overemphasizing of the second on the part of the Byzantines induced the Romans to deny to Constantinople that second rank in Church organization which it rightfully claimed. Similarly, Rome was prevented from recognizing early enough the change in Byzantium that favored the apostolic principle in Church organization. Thus it was that this dispute contributed so considerably toward intensifying the misunderstanding between West and East; a misunderstanding that, together with other factors, led to the schism so fateful for the history of Christianity." (pp. 298-299).

This study of the role of the importance of apostolicity in East-West relations is a major contribution to historical and theological scholarship. The twenty-six page bibliography at the end of this volume adds to the extreme usefulness of this very important book.

John E. Rexine
Colgate University



Paul J. Alexander, THE PATRIARCH NICEPHORUS OF CONSTNINOPLE, ECCLESIASTICAL POLICY AND IMAGE WORSHIP IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1958. pp. xiii, 287. Frontispiece. \$ 8.00.

This formidable book is not an easy one to read and a difficult one to criticize because of the complexities of the subject involved. Basically it is concerned with the controversy over the position of icons in the Byzantine Empire in the ninth century. The author uses the biography of the Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople as the core for his very learned and oftentimes ponderous discussion.

Professor Alexander has selected Nicephorus as the basis for his study because this prominent Byzantine hierarch was in an admirable position to be a first hand eye-witness of and participant in the historical events that in-

terest the author and events which were of prime importance in Nicephorus' own time.

Nicephorus particularly appeals to Alexander because this Patriarch was highly respected by his contemporaries as well as those who followed him. Alexander's principal contribution in this book is to bring to light the very important theological work of Nicephorus, particularly the as yet unpublished **Refutatio et Eversio**, which affords us an admirable summation of Byzantine iconophile theory.

With an elaborate analysis of this Byzantine document as well as his other published works, Alexander reconstructs a picture of Nicephorus in his own time in terms of Byzantine arguments for and against icons in the eighth and ninth centuries.

The result of all these elaborate researches of Professor Alexander leads to a rather simple conclusion: namely, that the Patriarch Nicephorus was indeed a noble hierarch of the Orthodox Church who had a burning interest and part in theological discussions and disputes; that in spite of this he was a good citizen of Byzantium, obedient to the imperial authority, but that he did not put up with attacks on the Christian faith and doctrines, no matter where the attacks came from.

One can hope that with the publication of this book now a reality, Professor Alexander can bring to light an edition of the **Refutatio et Eversio** with an English translation and commentary to serve as a necessary companion volume to the book under review.

Professor Alexander's book is a real contribution to Byzantine scholarship. Perhaps it will not have the appeal to the general public that it should have, but certainly the more learned will want this book and be happy that it is now available.

John E. Rexine
Colgate University



Helmut Thielicke, BETWEEN BOD AND SATAN, translated from German, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958.

This book deals with Christ's temptation in the wilderness. It is not a critical commentary upon the temptation narrative, but rather a meditation upon its meaning and its relevance for our time. The book appeared for the first time in German in 1938 and "was intended to strengthen the followers of Jesus Christ in their resistance to ideological tyranny" (p. v.). We may add that the synoptic narrative of Christ's trials was used in a similar way in the church of the Pre-Nicene period.

To be in temptation, in the opinion of the author of this book, means "to be untrue to God." It is the danger of being disobedient to God and being "constantly on the point of freeing ourselves from God." To be in temptation means to be in a state when we trust and believe in ourselves alone. The author's observations about the desert and solitude in connection with Jesus'

temptation are valuable. We are afraid of solitude, as the author sees it, because "our relation to God is out of order" (p. 20).

The author's suggestions as to the meaning of Christ's temptation are rather ambiguous and not necessarily in accordance with the synoptic narrative. The whole problem, in the author's opinion, is that "there is no temptation being something external and accidental." But Christ's temptations, although they are not accidental, come from without. By saying this, we do not minimize the reality of Jesus' temptation. Quite the contrary, we emphasize it, for he who was without sin experienced temptation in the realist and most profound way.

The author does not make any distinctions between "external" and "inner" temptations. He says, for instance, that Jesus went into solitude, the wilderness, and not "into the world of sinful, seductive opportunities," that we may see a hint of the meaning of temptation. "For we saw that the secret of temptation is the temptability of man. This secret lies in man himself, not outside him, not for instance in his opportunity for sinning" (p. 75). In other words, temptation "is not thrown into us from without by apples and serpents and opportunities." However, both the "serpent" and "the devil" are pictured in the Biblical narratives (Genesis and the Synoptic) as coming from without. The first Adam yielded to temptation, but the second Adam was victorious, for the prince of this world did not have any power over Him.

In Christ's temptation the author sees a "double consolation" First, Christ is our brother. He was sinless and yet tempted; we are not alone in our temptation. Secondly, He is the Lord, and as the Lord He is beyond all. We pray Him to keep us from temptation. The value of this book lies in its affirmation of a "double consolation," and not in the clarity of its theological interpretation of the event on which these consolations depend. The reader must keep in mind that the main tenor of this book results from the situation in which Germany found herself in the years after 1933.

Veselin Kesich



Edgar J. Goodspeed, MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST, Philadelphia: Wiston, 1959.

E. J. Goodspeed, the leading American scholar in the New Testament field, argues in this book for the traditional view that the first canonical Gospel was written by the Apostle Matthew. In doing so, he contradicts the majority of New Testament scholars.

In all three Synoptic Gospels, the call of Matthew comes immediately after the healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8, Mk. 2:1-12, Lk. 5:17-26). This placement is crucial for the author's argument. At this point, Jesus' life is actually in danger, for he was accused of blasphemy, and he who blasphemers the name of God is to be put to death (Lev. 24). "The timing of the call of Matthew points strongly to Isaiah's words about his own disciples and what had come of his action" (p. 37). Matthew was chosen to keep the record of Jesus' works and words. "Bind up the testimony, seal the

teaching among my disciples," (Isa. 8:16-18) says Isaiah at a time of crisis, when his own life is in danger, and these words are recalled repeatedly in this book in connection with the call of Matthew. Jesus, the author thinks, "probably" had Isaiah in mind when he called Levi.

In support of Matthew's authorship of the first Gospel, Goodspeed uses as an argument the Greek practice of giving as the title of a book the name of the man who had composed it in Greek. "The Greeks" writes Goodspeed, "did not name books after their barbaric sources, but after the men who wrote them in Greek" (p. 131). The Gospels were named, the author emphasizes, in the Greek manner. Matthew, as a tax collector, was supposed to have known Greek. This assertion is based upon tax collector papyri from Egypt, which serve as evidence that Greek was the official language of tax collectors in Egypt. Probably the same was true of tax collectors in Galilee.

The least convincing part of the book is the author's treatment of Papias' statement that Matthew compiled the **logia** in the Hebrew [Aramaic] language. He explains this statement by supposing that Matthew took down Jesus' sayings in Aramaic "and made them available to the twelve for subsequent consultation" (p. 130).

This book is particularly interesting because a veteran scholar has used a new approach to support a traditional viewpoint, and has done this in accordance with the standards of modern scholarship.

Veselin Kesich



Walter Nigg, WARRIORS OF GOD (The Great Religious Orders and their Founders), edited and translated from the German by Mary Ilford, London: Secker and Warburg, 1959.

This is an important book written by a Protestant scholar who tries to remove a "mountain of prejudice" and to show the essential characteristics of monasticism and the importance of it. He approaches his subject "with loving veneration, though not... uncritically." His book is "a new encounter with monasticism."

The book contains the following chapters: "St. Anthony and the Hermits of the Desert," "St. Pachomius and Cenobitism," "St. Basil and Eastern Monasticism," "St. Augustine and the Communal Life of the Clergy," "St. Benedict and his Rule," "St. Bruno and the Carthusians," "St. Bernard and the Cistercians," "St. Francis and the Friars Minor," "St. Dominic and the Order of Preachers," "St. Teresa and Carmel," "St. Ignatius Loyola and the Society of Jesus." At the end there is a good index of the main subjects.

The introduction is extremely important for an understanding of the spirit in which the book is written, and perhaps it is the most exciting chapter. Although the reader may well leave the introduction of many books for the end, if he reads it at all, in this book it is essential for him to start with the introduction. First of all, the author sees monasticism as natural, organic, "a valid development of Christianity" (p. 5). Monastic life has its source and its starting point in the very nature of the Christian religion. Monasticism is

not an infusion of alien blood into Christianity, but it is "an absolutely Christian phenomenon" (pp. 13-14), and it is definitely rooted in the New Testament (p. 7). Nigg points out very clearly that the first hermits got their inspiration from the New Testament. Their only justification for a life spent in solitude was in Jesus' teaching. As St. Anthony listened in church to the reading of Matt. 19:21 ("If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me"), he decided upon a new kind of life. This was "the beginning of his spiritual awakening." The Gospel lesson, for St. Anthony, was not a record of "an interesting conversation," but the power of God which moved him into a new pasture. The author looks upon Monasticism, and rightly so, as the consequence of Jesus' teaching, as well as a vivid and concrete expression of New Testament eschatology. The Church, though in this world, is not yet of this world.

Needless to say, the desert Fathers are indispensable for an understanding of both the Eastern and the Western monastic movements. The Carthusian movement, for instance, began as a revival of desert Christianity. In its later development, this movement combined eremitism and communal life. The Carthusian movement is particularly interesting, as it sheds light on the frequently asked question, "What is the value of monastic life for society?" This question expresses a common modern concern, but it represents a misunderstanding of the importance of the life of the fathers in the desert. This monastic flight from the world, as Nigg points out, is for the world's salvation. St. Anthony left the world, but "the world" came to him and asked help from the solitary in the desert. He was, as St. Athanasius said, "Egypt's spiritual physician." There is a similarity between the desert Fathers and the Carthusians, who are "wedded to [their] enclosure" if not to a place in a desert. They spend their lives in solitude and prayer. They are not concerned with "public opinion," but they pray for the public. The author illuminates their role with the story from Exodus 17:11-13. "This scene," Nigg comments, "may serve as a symbol of the Carthusians' mission. They intercede for Christendom, as Moses did for Isreal; they are praying hands raised to heaven for the eternal welfare of all men" (p. 179).

This book is written in a spirit of appreciation, yet with academic objectivity. The shortcomings of monastic living and monastic orders at certain period in their historical development are wrought out. The author is in agreement with the old criticism of eremitism and he approvingly quotes Palladius in **Historia Lausiaca** that in eremitism "every monk leadeth the ascetic life as he wishes." Then he points to the misuse of the Dominicans by the Curia during the Inquisition. Savonarola's "execution is another incident that casts a shadow on the history of the order" (p. 276). His order abandoned him at the time when he badly needed its help.

He mentions that the Reformation started in a monastic cell and that Luther remained a monk in his heart, but that Protestantism suffered because of its lack of monastic life. Another Protestant theologian, Walther Loewenich (**Modern Catholicism**, tr. by R. H. Fuller, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1959) praises Nigg's book, accepts the spirit in which it is written, and adds, "No intelligent person today should dispute the fact that the Re-

formation polemic against monasticism was a one-sided affair. This powerful manifestation of a heroic faith cannot be dismissed as a religion of works... It was monasticism that produced most of the great saints... The Gospel parable of the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45f) is a text which illuminates monasticism and the lives of the saints" (p. 349).

This book, however, is incomplete in one important respect. Only a few pages (pp. 83-89) are devoted to Eastern monasticism after St. Basil. There is almost nothing about monastic living in the Byzantine Empire. The controversy which arose out of Hesychasm is merely mentioned. This omission does not detract from the importance of the book as a witness to the spiritual power latent in the monastic movement.

Veselin Kesich



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